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summer
1978

THE ANTI-NAZI LEAGUE

*WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND
COMMUNISM*

*ACTION PROGRAMME FOR
WOMEN*

LEFT UNITY

*THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT
AND THE ELECTIONS*

*BROAD LEFT DEFEAT IN
THE AUEW*

LENIN & LUXEMBURG

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EDITORIAL

Ten years on from the eruption of the German students, the French General Strike and the massive demonstrations against the American embassy in London, the European left is celebrating the "rebirth of revolutionary politics." On first sight there may be much to celebrate. In the wake of the anti-Vietnam war mobilisations and the massive upsurge of the French workers came the Italian upsurge of 1969, the sharp rise in the tempo of the class struggle in Britain between 1971 and 1974, the final expulsion of American Imperialism from Vietnam, the overthrow of the 40 year old dictatorship in Portugal, the victory for the national liberation struggles in Mozambique and Angola and the break up of the Francoist regime in Spain. These events, coinciding with the first serious world recession since the Second World War, have definitively broken up the relative Imperialist stability which marked the last 25 years and which condemned the Trotskyist movement to crushing isolation. Significant self-proclaimed revolutionary organisations now exist in most European countries, in North and Latin America and in Asia.

Yet closer analysis reveals that most of these organisations have run headlong into the limits of their own politics, revealing a chronic absence of revolutionary programme - an inability to deploy tactics which form part of an effective strategy for breaking the mass of the working class from the old social democratic leadership. The bankruptcy of the anti-Trotskyist 'new left', with its eclectic combination of elements gleaned from Maoist and Guevarist neo-popularism and third-period Stalinism - with borrowings from libertarianism and Syndicalism, is now manifest. Organisations like Lotta Continua and Avanguardia Operaia in Italy, the MIR in Chile and the PRP(BR) in Portugal, having oscillated towards guerillarism and armed struggle, have since retreated headlong into the arms of popular fronts, left-wing Generals and the old Stalinist and Social Democratic parties. The principal current on a world scale claiming the mantle of Trotskyism - 'The United Secretariat of the Fourth International', though avoiding the grosser excesses of these 'new' groupings, has proved time and time again incapable of operating revolutionary tactics which maintain total independence from the reformist and centrist parties, whilst breaking sections of workers from these formations in struggle. In Chile, Argentina and Portugal the USFI sections have made opportunist concessions to popular frontist combinations and to left-Bonapartist figures like Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. In Europe today we find the USFI coquetting with Eurocommunism, a social democratic tendency within Stalinism. In Britain the IMG makes systematic opportunist concessions to the left wing of the Trade Union bureaucracy (the 'class struggle left wing'), to petit-bourgeois feminism (the 'autonomous women's movement'), to bankrupt right centrism and liberalisation (the 'unified revolutionary organisation') and to popular frontist 'Anti-fascism' (the ANL). They thus liquidate in theory and in practice the Leninist party and the method of Trotsky's transitional programme. In part three of our Party and Programme series, we deal with the

analysis of and struggle against centrism waged by Lenin and the Bolsheviks within the Second International. We believe that the historical experience of the revolutionary communist movement and the experience of today's struggles both point to the necessity of a sharp struggle against centrism. We are aware that we will be accused of sectarianism for this, but we remember Trotsky's words in a similar situation, "Reformists and centrists readily seize upon every occasion to point a finger at our 'sectarianism'. Most of the time they have in mind not our weak but our strong side; our serious attitude towards theory; our effort to plumb every political situation to the bottom, and to advance clear cut slogans; our hostility to 'easy' and 'comfortable' decisions, which deliver from cares today, but prepare a catastrophe on the morrow. Coming from opportunists, the accusation of sectarianism is most often a compliment."

Sectarianism, Centrism and the Fourth International - October 1935.

Thus on a world scale we can see that the end product of the last ten years is a glaring disproportion between the enormous opportunities which capitalism in economic and social crisis presents would-be revolutionaries with, and the political crisis of the centrist currents, able only to mouth the formulas and catchwords of revolution whilst collapsing time and time again into reformist actions. Whilst heightened periods of class struggle show these assorted tendencies to the left, downturns, such as experienced in Britain since the advent of the Labour Government, lead to a sharp right turn. In this journal we deal with these tendencies - on the question of elections, on women's liberation, on the struggle against fascism and on left unity.

Workers Power - July 1978

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THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT, THE LEFT AND ELECTIONS

What should be the position of revolutionary communists in the coming general election. The Labour Government since 1974 has performed an inestimable service for the bosses. From 1974 to 1975 under a smokescreen of left rhetoric, with promises to bring about "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families" it demobilised the movement which had freed the Pentonville Five and won the miners claim. In its first year of office Labour handed out a number of half-hearted reforms, plus the unavoidable repeal of the detested Industrial Relations Act, vociferously proclaiming an end to incomes policy, and preparing the enormous diversion of the 'Great Debate' on EEC withdrawal. The strike movement of 1971-1974, though reaching levels of militancy unseen since 1926, remained under the leadership of the militants of the left-wing of the L.P. and CP at a rank and file level and nationally though putting enormous pressure on them, under the leadership of the TU 'lefts'. This leadership was unable to see beyond the limited reforms, the wages rises (both to prove totally transitory gains) to the real crisis of British capitalism and the inevitable return to the attack on the part of the bosses that this would necessitate. Worse they led working class activists into the chauvinist campaign around EEC withdrawal, including a sense of defeat on the more class conscious elements after involving them in one side of a battle between sectors of the ruling class.

When after '75, rampant inflation, mounting unemployment, the crash of giant firms in the car industry, and the propaganda machine of the bosses media drove home to every working class home the imminence of the most serious capitalist crisis since the 30's, the militants had neither leadership nor perspective to resist the Government's sharp turn to wage freeze, unchecked unemployment, drastic cuts in social services. The fair-weather reform programmes of the T.U.C., the Labour lefts, and the CP were dropped by the Government like hot potatoes. The TUC, with taunts from the Labour Government to put up or shut up, dropped its own proposals one by one. So too after a decent interval did the Lefts in the TUs. Deserted by the Scanlons and Jones the Heffers and Mikardos fell silent in their turn. The Lefts were unable to suggest a programme to deal with real capitalist crisis (when capitalism **could not afford** reforms and demanded **sacrifices** to 'save the national economy') because any such programme would have to be based on

- (1), Solving the crisis **at the expense of the bosses** - by expropriating the big monopolies without compensation,
- (2) Mobilising the direct action of the millions of trade unionists against the inevitable 'direct action' of the bosses, their army and bureaucracy would take to smash such a solution.

Neither the trade union bureaucrat nor the parliamentary cretin dared envisage such a prospect. However the exigencies of a period of crises did not allow these gentlemen to remain silent for long. They were forced to speak out **and act** on the side of the Government's attacks on the working class. Foot stomped the union conferences pleading for wage restraint. Benn engineered in a particularly treacherous way the defeat

of the miners and Bidwell appears as the architect of the racist Select Committee Report on Immigration.

In 1976 and 1977 spontaneous movements of resistance to the cuts in real wages erupted but the almost complete opposition of the bureaucracy at all levels, isolated and fragmented the struggles. In the wake of the defeats at Grunwick, the Miners, the Firemen and in Leyland a definite retreat is born witness to by the low strike figures for the first three months of 1978 and the debacle for the Broad Left in the AUEW elections.

The CP, dependent on the Labour and TU Lefts for its strategy of a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism, has to fall in one step to the left of the Government-TUC-Labour and TU Left bloc. Its leading industrial figures like Derek Robinson prove themselves adept agents in class collaboration, and betrayal as the Speke events show. It cannot mobilise the rank and file (as it helped to do in 1971-72) via the LCDTU in a situation which would bring the whole wrath of the bureaucrats on its head.

The SWP(IS)

The SWP is incapable of appreciating the depth of British capitalism's crisis or the effects this has on the class struggle. High profit levels mean for them that there is money in the kitty to be won by militant trade unionism - outside of this framework they fall into tearful protest and moralising about the evil nature of capitalism. Faced with the continued adhesion of the class to Labourism they search desperately for one stunt after another to make themselves a 'credible alternative' to Labour. They are incapable of going beyond the average militants loathing of the union bureaucrats petty-privileges and constant betrayals. Above all they can offer no programme for tackling the political issues which are inextricably linked up with the economic struggle and which if not consciously addressed by a fighting strategy will trip up and confuse the most 'militant' shop steward. This kind of centrism is strong on left rhetoric, on occasional courageous acts of militancy but faces with a serious situation it falls into the farcical slogan 'A vote for Bogues means Rees Must Go!' It is no accident that the SWP falls into electoral cretinism at the same time as taking fright at the isolation its street fighting tactics brought it, it imitates the CP strategy on dealing with fascism (the ANL).

The IMG and SOCIALIST UNITY

The IMG/Socialist Challenge/Socialist Unity hopelessly muddles up the method of fighting for a united front with reformist workers and their leaders – a united front that would if achieved in the present period be limited to a few immediate issues, with the presentation of a focussed transitional programme as a strategic alternative to reformism. As a result it achieves neither objective. The IMG's position on election hovers uneasily between the consistent reformism of the CPs – a Left Government with Communist MPs to start the slow business of legislating towards socialism, and the communist position of using the election forum for presenting the essentials of a revolutionary programme addressed to the burning issues facing the working class. Instead a programme which will be acceptable to workers, blacks, women, squatters, ecologists etc. is floated, in order to bring into being a 'class struggle left wing'. A third element causing further confusion is that 'Socialist Unity' is a central element in founding a 'united revolutionary organisation'. Thus its platform is too diffuse for a united front, and is devised not for **common action** with reformists but for common propaganda. It is totally inadequate as a revolutionary action programme to meet the needs of the crisis and it is totally inadequate as a 'step' let alone a basis for a revolutionary organisation.

Thus while Socialist Unity calls itself a coalition of 'far left' or 'marxist' organisations its mass electoral propaganda limits itself to immediate demands. Hilda Kean, the most 'successful' candidate so far can put out a leaflet for the October 20th by-election in Spitalfields which limited itself to opposing Healey's 10% limit on wages, making wages 'inflation-proof', more homes, schools and hospitals, nationalisation of firms declaring redundancies and reduce the working week, freeze all prices and rents, 'full rights and liberation for women', 'no platform for the National Front' and full support for black self defense, withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, down with racist regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia and an end to all Britain's Military Alliances and lastly a clause that deserves to be quoted at length

"Make the resources available for this programme by ending all compensation payments to the old owners of the nationalised industries. Stop all interest payments to the banks and money lenders, as the first step towards the nationalisation of the finance houses."

This programme is referred to as a 'socialist solution' to be gained by 'mass action'. An Islington Socialist Unity leaflet for the 4th May local elections again limits itself to calling for nationalising firms that declare redundancies and nationalising the banks and finance houses. In Waltham Forest we find that Socialist Unity does not 'have any great faith in Parliament' (sic) and 'believes in changing the system', the problem is that 'the wealth is in the wrong hands!'

Let us be clear. These platforms are not the basic planks of a revolutionary programme, they are reforms and are presented in a reformist manner. Nowhere are the direct action tactics necessary to fight for these reforms – the solidarity strike, mass picket, workers defence squads, factory occupations even mentioned. Indeed this is not even a radical

reformist platform in that the scope of expropriation is expressly limited to failed capitalist enterprises and the banks – both of which measures would leave capitalism intact. What is more these measures are posed within the rubric 'The Resources are there to meet our needs' ie the cash will thus be released to pay for the above reforms. Disguised 'transitional demands' such as the 'inflation proofing' of wages, benefits and pensions are robbed of the vital element of working class direct action and workers inspection and control (the working class cost of living index and the committees of trade unionists and housewives).

In the last analysis what makes this a reformist programme is that nowhere is the question of the nature of the capitalist state's resistance to these demands even hinted at. Nowhere is it even posed that a mass working class movement would have to create a **workers government**, backed up by a workers militia and workers councils. Instead a further 'Labour Government' is presented as 'the alternative'. No demands are put on this Government to break with the bosses. Instead it is simply stated that the struggle must go on. That this reformist hodge podge should be the first serious electoral project of the 'British Section of the Fourth International' should convince any doubters that the IMG stands on the terrain of the left centrist opponents of the founder of the F.I. This programme has as little to do with Trotskyism as it has to do with being an action programme capable of meeting the urgent needs of the working class.

The ANTI-PABLOITES and the LIB-LAB GOVERNMENT

The 'Anti-Pabloites' focus their attention centrally on the pact with the Liberals, putting the breaking of this as the first task facing workers. Here they start from a false premise. The Lib-Lab pact is not the main axis of the Labourites' class collaboration in the present period. This lies in the TUC Govt. Social Contract with the CBI/Tories on wage controls, cuts in public spending, repression in Ireland, building up the apparatus of repression at home, etc. The Lib-Lab pact is only one of a series of parliamentary blocs (with the Northern Ireland Unionists, with the Welsh and Scots Nationalists). It has not involved major concessions by the L.P. – it has not even used the Liberals as an excuse for dropping important reforms. Its major excuse and one abetted by the whole TUC is the seriousness of the 'national crisis'. The bloc is *not* a coalition with the Liberals – it has no governmental aspects beyond 'consultations', there is no common legislative programme, no intention of standing on a common electoral programme or of supporting one another's candidates. This explains the almost complete *indifference* to the Pact in the ranks of the L.P. We are of course in favour of breaking it, but we are also in favour of the L.P. breaking from the whole gamut of its anti-working class policies and to single out in isolation the Lib-Lab Pact is to suggest that breaking it is the key step in 'breaking with the bourgeoisie'. The hopeless insubstantiality of this position is testified to negatively by the positions of the WRP, WSL and Spartacists. In the WRP's case the Pact is turned (by the alchemy of Healyite 'dialectics') into the Lib-Lab *Government* and singled out for being brought down by a General Strike or 'forced to resign' by some other means and

replaced by . . . a Labour Govt. pledged to socialist policies. Apart from the reformist implications carried by the suggestion that a Labour Govt could carry out 'socialist policies' or a socialist programme' this position relates neither to the objective situation nor to the tasks facing the working class. It downgrades the struggle against *Labourite* class collaborations on wages, cuts, unemployment, state repression in Britain and Ireland, racist immigration laws, etc before and after a general election, with a Labour overall majority in parliament or without it. It identifies the Liberals as the source of Labour's betrayals rather than the liberalism of the Labour and TU leaders. Nor does it relate to the existing identification of the working class both electorally and through the TU's with the Labour Govt. All the WRP's journalistic hot air about the 'seething hatred of the masses for the Lib-Lab Govt' notwithstanding, the great bulk of workers (when not directly in strike against the Govt) see it as a lesser evil than the Tories, as a protection against the attacks they experienced under Heath and which they can expect under Thatcher. Revolutionaries have to explain that the Labour Govt is not merely a weak protection against the Tories but an active aider and abetter of them; that its', and the TUC's attacks on wages, conditions, jobs demoralise and weaken the unity and fighting strength of the class driving the least class conscious into voting Tory or NF, destroying the faith of the great bulk of organised workers in the effectiveness of trade unions or direct action, isolating and victimising the militants. Revolutionaries need to state the full truth to the class — every struggle against these policies of the Lab/TU leaders 'threatens the Labour Govt' because the Labour Govt pledges its existence to attacking the working class. To place as a condition on any serious struggle that it should not threaten the Labour Govt is to announce in advance that you are not serious about winning, that you will give in to Govt blackmail. The only correct position is to say 'no holding back to preserve the anti-working class Labour Govt', 'if the Govt chooses to fall in defence of the bosses then that is its responsibility not ours'. Equally incorrect is WRP's 'bring down the Labour Govt' and the IMG's 'the best way to preserve the Labour Govt is to struggle against it'. Both fail to challenge the crippling hold the 'preserve labour' argument exerts in every serious struggle.

The WSL falls into the same trap of calling the Pact a government and seeing this 'reactionary alliance' as the source of all the ills suffered by the working class at its hands. (It is a reactionary alliance but it is also an alliance *between* reactionaries and in no way would Rees, Callaghan, Foot and Benn be one whit the less reactionary if they stopped meeting Steel and Pardoe once a month.) The WSL talk vaguely about breaking the coalition by 'working class action'. This slogan is closely allied with an older piece of Healyite 'orthodoxy' the demand to make the 'Left MP's fight' (or 'Lefts' as the WSL put it). Here the 'Left' MP's are singled out by the WSL for having demands put on them; i.e. the Labour Govt or Party as a whole is not the principle object of these demands. The implication is that the masses have and can have no illusions in the Callaghan Healy leadership but that the 'Lefts' Wise and Skinner, Heffer and Mikado represent *the* focus of their illusions. The WSL argue that the exposure of the 'Lefts' is a crucial stage in achieving a breakthrough to revolutionary politics and that this is the present stage that must be addressed. Now whilst it is true that revolutionaries must constantly expose these 'Lefts' and that in periods of mass struggle they become particularly dangerous, the above position suggests that these 'Lefts' must be first installed as leaders of the LP and form a government where they will expose themselves *in action* and then the masses will turn to the revolutionary alternative. In effect this becomes not a challenge to but an endorsement of the belief that the crucial dividing line in the Labour Movement is between Left and Right Wing reformists. The method of demanding that reformist leaders *fight* to defend workers' vital needs must be applied concretely to those 'misleaders' who are standing at the head of the forces of struggle in any given situation and it must be specific about

what demands and what methods of struggle should be employed. Above all it must include the element of mobilising independently those forces that can resist a betrayal by the leaders. In the present period when the Left MP's have identified themselves almost totally with Callaghan & Co., the blanket demand for them to fight falls into all these traps.

The Spartacists see the crucial feature of the present situation as the Lib-Lab pact. They term it a 'Popular Front' and identify the crucial weapon for breaking it as 'conditional abstention' from a Labour vote. Anything less than this they identify as endorsing the popular front. This argument adds nothing to the WRP position and is wrong for the same reasons. The Labour Govt now and the LP that will stand in the coming general election stand on a pro-bourgeois programme. In no sense can 'critical support for Labour' be interpreted as support for this programme; what is central about this support is that the LP is based on the organised working class, i.e. it is a bourgeois *workers* party. If such a party forms an electoral alliance involving a common programme, support for each other's candidates, a voting bloc in parliament and possibly a joint government (sharing of ministries) then it can be legitimately described as a Popular Front. We specifically condemn a Popular Front because it is from the beginning *limited* to pro-bourgeois policies, i.e. it has formed an alliance *against* the demands and pressure of its own supporters and involved them in supporting an open government of the bourgeoisie. The first demand we make of a 'workers party' or parties in this situation is that it breaks with its bourgeois partner and attempts to carry out specified pro-working class demands. In essentials this position is the same as that of a minority Labour Govt which restricts itself to carrying out measures that bourgeois parties will agree to (anti-working class measures and reforms that do not challenge capitalism). This was the Comintern's position with regard to the MacDonald Govt of 1924 and Trotsky's position with regard to the Popular Front of 1936. In the latter case Trotsky opposed the slogan 'Down with the Popular Front'. The question of voting is another matter. The Spartacists maintain that it is a principle to abstain from voting for a worker's party in alliance with a bourgeois party. This is clearly nonsense. It is a principle not to vote for a bourgeois party and therefore a principle not to vote for bourgeois candidates on a Popular Front slate. Therefore whatever alliance was struck between Labour and the Liberals — no vote for a Liberal, in France — no vote for a Radical, etc. Since a critical vote for a 'workers party' cannot be interpreted as support for its *policies*, no more can support for a workers party in a popular front be interpreted as support for the policy of a popular front. In fact the Spartacist position is a sectarian yearning for a boycott. Lenin made it clear time and time again that a boycott is defensible only in a period when the working class is directly faced with the possibility of seizing power, i.e. by the task of the armed insurrection. That this is the drift of Spartacist politics is underlined by their fallback position that the Social Contract itself makes the Labour Govt a popular front. Their whole method — sectarian in form contains a right wing revisionist kernel — that critical support is predicated on a Labour Govt not carrying out pro-bourgeois policies, i.e. that critical support is in some sense support for certain policies of a Labour Govt. We might ask the Spartacists what these policies would be? Are they simply Labour's programme minus the Social Contract and the Lib-Lab Pact? This is powerfully implied by the fact that they are prepared to relax 'conditional non-support' in favour of Labourite opponents of the Lib-Lab Pact who take their opposition as far as a refusal to vote for the Govt until the Pact is broken. Or would Labour have to positively adopt the programme of a Workers Government? But there the Spartacists run full tilt into another of their sectarian opportunist revisions of the transitional programme; that the workers government is merely a 'popular expression' for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Notes

How could they demand of a Social-Democratic Govt that it institute the latter? At the end of this road stands the hideous spectre of the 'Militant' (G.B.) with their Enabling Act.

Thus the Anti-Pabloites come full circle to a position of posing as an alternative leadership to the Right-wing Labourites - the 'Lefts'.

This farrago of confusion from the 'Anti-Pabloites' can on reflection be seen for what it is. Opportunism with a sectarian face. Under the fearful grimaces and contortions of sectarian tactics; 'Bring down the Lib-Lab Govt', 'conditional non-support for Labour', under the pugnacious cries for general strikes and boycotts, the Left Labourites (either the hypothetical ones who have been made to fight in the case of the WRP/WSL or the totally imaginary ones who vote against the Popular Front in the case of the Spartacists) are advanced as the next 'alternative leadership' for exposure. This fossilised schema-mongering bears as much relationship to a concrete analysis of a concrete situation and the deployment of tactics of the USFI based on projected 'new mass vanguards' and 'class struggle tendencies'. It has the added disadvantage that its permanent refutation by reality drives its exponents wild with rage.

WORKERS ACTION and the SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN for a LABOUR VICTORY

Workers Power has broad agreement with the project of the supporters of the paper Workers Action (WA) on the necessity to mount a campaign against the anti-working class record of the Labour Government and for a Labour Victory over the Tories. We consider the draft programme carried in WA No 105 represents a principled alternative to the reformist mish mash of Socialist Unity and the SWP. The overwhelming number of working class militants will vote labour to 'Keep out the Tories' and defend the class against the ferocious attacks the latter will launch on the unions, on immigrants, on democratic rights etc. They will not vote Labour as an endorsement of its reactionary policies on wages, cuts, Ireland, immigration etc. Therefore it is correct for revolutionaries to raise a fighting programme around which active opposition to these policies can be built in the event of a labour victory and to minimise the demoralisation which a Labour defeat will bring.

However we have serious criticisms of both the programme carried in WA and the rationale the paper puts forward for the campaign. In our view the programme lacks sharpness on the question of what action working class organisations should take against the treacherous policies of the Labour Government. It states 'no more wage curbs' but it does not call for an end to the TUC/Govt wage ceilings and for full support for all workers like the firemen who go for claims which break these norms. This will be central in the coming months as the Government and the Bankers try to force the unions into a real wage cutting 6% limit. The direct action element is missing from the demand that 'wage increases should at the very least keep up with price increases'. Presumably the W.A. comrades believe that the only way this can be fought for as a class wide unifying element is around

the struggle for a rising scale of wages linked to a working class cost of living index calculated and fought for by shop stewards committees drawing in working class women, trade unionists and housewives. This vital element of mobilisation for struggle, of direct action is thus missing.

Likewise on unemployment to concentrate on the 35 hour week (as the Socialist Challenge Industrial Conference also does) is extremely dangerous at the moment when the TU leaders are offering to trade reductions in the working day for a wage ceiling. Again the 'direct action' element involved in a shop steward controlled sliding scale of hours is missing. The section relating to cuts, correct as far as it goes, does not raise the demand to force Labour Councils to refuse to implement the cuts, and for Labour MPs to vote against them in parliament.

The question of the maintenance of a Labour Government is not faced squarely. Whilst we should defend the Labour Government against Tory attacks we should be clear that time and time again it has chosen to stand or fall on carrying through its anti-working class measures. In these instances we are neither in favour of unions holding back on wage claims to preserve it nor are we in favour of Labour councillors or MPs voting for these measures. We are in favour of them voting against even where Callaghan and Co. choose to make these issues of confidence.

W.A. rightly points to the failure of the Tribune Left in the Labour Party, and the TU lefts to lead a fight. But the crux of their failure is not just the bankruptcy of measures which take the economic and political integrity of capitalism as sacrosanct, but their insistence on sinking their differences to keep Labour in at all costs. No campaign of resistance can duck this issue.

Lastly if the programme lacks this sharpness as a basis for mobilising the grass roots of the LP and the TUs against the Labour Government and the TU bureaucrats, it also fails to pose the question of building a movement capable of either forming an alternative leadership which can launch the offensive to 'raze the capitalist system down to its foundations', and establish a socialist planned economy. The latter is posed as a distant maximum programme. The W.A. comrades are obviously confused about whether they are attempting to build a united front with reformist workers who wish to fight over limited immediate issues or whether they are trying to build a revolutionary current in the Labour Party around a fighting action programme for working class power as the only solution to the present period of capitalist crisis. For these reasons Workers Power supports the call for a conference to plan a campaign whilst putting forward a series of amendments to the inadequate draft programme.

CLASS STRUGGLE

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workers power theses on elections

1. "The bourgeois parliaments, which constitute one of the most important parts of the state machinery, cannot be won over by the proletariat any more than can the bourgeois order in general. . . Communism repudiates parliamentarianism as the form of the class dictatorship of the proletariat; it repudiates the possibility of winning over parliament; its aim is to destroy parliamentarianism. Therefore it is only possible to speak of utilising the bourgeois state organisations with the object of destroying them. The question can only and exclusively be discussed on this plane." (Comintern Theses on Elections)

This fundamental position regarding the bourgeois state and its parliaments governs communist election tactics. We view electoral campaigns not in terms of obtaining the maximum votes in order to legislate socialism via the bourgeois state machine, but above all as a means of revolutionary mobilisation of the masses against the state around the programme and slogans of a revolutionary communist party and the deepening of the influence of the party in the working class. Communists elected to parliament must be "tribunes of the people" in constant touch with the moods and concerns of the masses. The communist fraction in parliament is the party's "scouting party" in the bourgeois institution, working under strict subordination to the party.

2. VOTING FOR THE REFORMISTS

Why then do we vote for a mass reformist party in circumstances such and when communists remain a tiny minority in the class? Not in any way because of its programme, or tactics which are *bourgeois* ie they embody the politics of the class enemy. Our first duty is to say what is to the class and so we can in no way hide the communist criticism of these treacherous policies or the fact that the Reformist Bureaucrats are (consciously or unconsciously) agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class. Against them we pose the historic necessity of the working class to seize state power, expropriate the expropriators and suppress their revolts by force. However, the masses do not *yet* accept this view and if all we could do was to baldly state these necessary truths we would be barren sectarians converting this truth into an abstract utopia. We not only have these fundamental criticisms of the reformists, but we wish the masses to prove to themselves in practice the correctness of it. The Reformists are bourgeois agents indeed but agents *in the working class* – holding the leadership of mass workers organisations. Their deal with the bourgeoisie puts them at odds not only with the historic goal of the working class (its emancipation) but also with the immediate needs of workers. In times of capitalist stability the reformist bureaucrats resting upon the better off sections of the class, skilled workers etc, whose conditions of life are those of a comfortable petit-bourgeois, and taking advantage of the splits and divisions in the working class are able to sell out/or sell short the workers section by section without provoking a general rejection and revolt. The onset of severe capitalist crisis puts these brokers between labour and capital in a cleft stick; more and more reveals them as agents of the bosses in the most immediate questions –

unofficial revolts of the rank and file break out against them. Yet without these revolts becoming fully conscious of the *reasons* for reformist betrayal they will be unable to finally remove these traitors – at best replacing them with left or militant talkers. This spontaneous tendency is however the starting point for revolutionaries who are not hopeless sectarians. We have to give the spontaneous criticism of the angered masses consciousness of a sure goal; we have to give our valid 'criticism' our 'alternative programme' mass force. As long as the masses wish to keep 'their' parties in government rather than allow the open bourgeois parties to rule we support this elementary act of class consciousness. Following the method of the united front even in the field of the ballot box we strike together – ie we vote with them for the Reformist Workers Party. But we march separately, under our own banner (ie our *programme*), which we raise against the reformist leaders as a series of demands on them (see the last section of our Action Programme). In sum this method is that outlined by the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in its theses on Tactics dealing with the fight for a Workers Government and reiterated by Trotsky in the Transitional Programme.

"Of all parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road of struggle for the workers and farmers government. On this road we promise them full support against capitalist reaction. At the same time we indefatigably develop agitation around those transitional demands which should in our opinion form the programme of the 'workers and farmers government' ". (Transitional Programme)

3. LEFT REFORMISTS AND CENTRISTS

As well as mass reformist parties (the Social Democratic and Labour parties in Scandinavia, Germany, Austria and in Australia, Canada etc; the Stalinist Parties in Italy and both in countries like Spain, Portugal and France etc) there often exists small sect-like reformist parties like the British CP, the centrist groups originating in Maoism/Guevarism (PRP in Portugal, AO and Lotta Continua in Italy and *also* the left-centrists emerging from the wreckage of Trotsky's F.I. As stated above our reasons for 'supporting' a reformist workers party lie in the hold it has on the *masses*. Left Reformist sects like the British CP or centrist sects like the SWP, let alone centrist propaganda blocs like Socialist Unity are not in any sense mass formations and therefore the tactic of critical support outlined above does not apply. We do not vote for a candidate because his/her policies are 'a little better than', or a 'step forward from' those of the main mass party. Thus we do not argue a vote for Left Labourites as against the right within the LP electoral lists nor a vote for the CP because its policies are better (as the SWP is now proposing and as Socialist Unity ought to do if its 'class struggle' line is consistent). The working class needs neither a left reformist nor a centrist programme and leaders to mislead and confuse it. A 'critical support position' for these groups says in essence 'it is very important to support this programme, so much so that we

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are not going to vote with you for the mass workers party, but of course we have some criticisms of it'. The whole weight of this position is to *endorse* a left reformist/centrist platform and the sect which created it as a necessary step from, as a real (albeit incomplete) break with reformism.

4. EXCEPTIONS

The 'critical support' for the mass reformist party position outlined above is however a *tactic*, an important and very general one but a tactic nonetheless. Therefore there are situations to which it is inapplicable. Obviously where there is a mass revolutionary party, it openly confronts the reformists on the ballot papers as well as in all other fields. Also wherever a revolutionary group has the strength to do so it puts up a candidate against the reformist. When it does this if does it not on the cowardly 'we don't want to win' or 'only in a safe Labour seat' or 'only against a right winger' positions of Socialist Challenge. A split in the working class vote whereby a Tory is elected, is an evil more than compensated for by an effective winning of important sections of workers to a revolutionary programme of struggle.

A different situation exists where sections of the masses, angered by the actions of the Labour traitors break loose from their hold and enter into the ranks of existing left reformist/centrist organisations.

Here it may be correct to give critical support to this mass break with the established reformists in order to fight for a transition to revolutionary politics. A position of 'critical support' is not a recommendation for the centrist programme but an endorsement of the break. No such situation has yet presented itself in Britain. In Ireland situations that *could* be so evaluated have occurred in 1969 around B. Devlin's candidacy at the right of the civil rights agitation and then the resistance to British repression and also in the case of the recent split in the Irish Labour Party. In each case a concrete

analysis is necessary.

A further possibility exists that of a crucial event like the imminent outbreak of a war where a significant non-revolutionary group takes a 'correct' position (its reasons and the rest of its politics may be wrong) eg the ILP in the first world war or the American CP in 1940. Here *critical* support (ie posing the communist programme as demands) may help rally the vanguard from the social traitors and expose the muddle, inconsistency etc of the centrists.

5. In two elections in the past we abandoned our position of critical support for Labour. In the Walsall bye-election we argued inside the I-CL, for a vote for the SWP candidate. We argued for this on two grounds, given that the election came at the height of a campaign of racist hysteria (Summer '76), the SWP standing on an anti-racist platform would stand as a rallying point for the black community and anti-racists both locally and nationally. Secondly the SWP stood clearly against the 'social contract' at a time when it appeared that opposition was beginning to mount to the trade union bureaucracy/Labour Government alliance. We took a similar position on Stetchford bye-election calling for a vote for the IMG candidate. By the Ladywood bye-election (Autumn '77) we had reverted to a position of critical support for Labour.

In retrospect the positions we took on the elections at Walsall and Stetchford, to abandon a position of critical support for Labour were wrong. We overestimated the likelihood of substantial sections of immigrant and white workers breaking with Labour over its policies on race and wage curbs. On this question, a matter of dispute between Workers Power and the I-CL, the latter were undoubtedly right as against us.

RESOLUTION ON ELECTORAL TACTICS ADOPTED AT THE APRIL 1978 NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF WORKERS POWER



AUEW Elections: broad left debacle

The defeat of Bob Wright, the Broad Left candidate for the AUEW presidency, by Terry Duffy, marks a major setback for the Left. The shift to the right in the second largest union in the country brings with it the very real possibility of a consolidation of the right's position in the Trade Unions as a whole through the merger of the Engineers with the EEPTU.

The decline in strength of the Left is symptomatic of the general downturn in militancy throughout the working class since the imposition of the Social Contract. The constant refusal by the trade union leaders to fight for their members' interests, to the extent of organised sabotage, sell-outs and victimisation, has taken its toll - the recently published strike figures are the lowest for years. In general the strength of the Social Contract has been the enforcement of its terms by the trade union leaders but, more particularly, it was the role of the 'Lefts', Scanlon and Jones, which ensured its continuing success. The need for a militant rank and file movement in the trade unions which can fight independently of, and when necessary against, such misleaders, only becomes more glaring as time goes on. However, if such a movement is to avoid breeding its own generation of fake 'Lefts' it must be grounded in a Marxist understanding of the nature and role of the Trade Union Bureaucracy.

The bureaucracy exists, essentially, as a negotiating team between the rank and file of the unions and the bosses and their state. As such it has a distinct interest in dampening down the class struggle or, as the bureaucrats themselves might put it, in ensuring 'the right kind of atmosphere for negotiations to take place. Clearly, in a situation of direct conflict, the bureaucracy has a vested interest in re-

gaining the bourgeois status quo, which means sabotaging the struggle of the working class.

Nonetheless, the bureaucracy is not *simply* the agent of the bourgeoisie, as for example, the police are. On the contrary, because its origins are within the working class movement, the bureaucracy is an agent which is both of, and against the labour movement. As a result, and because they can only maintain their position as long as large sections of the rank and file accept their leadership, the union leaders can often put themselves at the head of rank and file militancy. In this way they can both buttress their position as leaders with whom the bourgeoisie must negotiate, and ensure that the movement stays within the norms of capitalist society.

It is also the dual nature of the trade union bureaucracy, the fact that it is under pressure from both the rank and file and from the bosses, that is at the root of the formation of its 'Left' and 'Right' wings. Those leaders who gain the leadership of militant unions, quite apart from their own politics, are under pressure from the membership constantly, and, consequently, more often have to oppose sections of the bourgeoisie or their state. By the same token leaders of unions which, because of their size or the nature of the industry in which the majority of the membership is concentrated, are more often susceptible to pressure from the bourgeoisie and, therefore, tend to form the 'Right' wing of the labour movement.

From such an analysis it is immediately clear that it is the 'Lefts' who are in the best position to head off the most militant sections of the class. The credibility of individual 'Left' leaders, often gained from a genuinely militant background, has been enough, on countless occasions, to divert and suffocate militant movements at the crucial point. Thus, one of the major tasks of revolutionaries in the unions, whilst supporting every positive position adopted by the 'Lefts' against the right wing, is to expose every retreat from confrontation and every diversion from the needs of the class by such 'Lefts'.

Because of their rejection of revolutionary politics, the Stalinists of the Communist Party and their allies who form the Broad Left, did not adopt this position with regard to Hugh Scanlon after they had campaigned successfully for his election in 1967. Instead of using that campaign to launch a movement committed to winning the demands that Scanlon had called for, the Broad Left meekly accepted a three year wage deal which outlawed local bargaining (the backbone of the engineering shop stewards and, therefore of the Broad Left itself) except for productivity deals.

The next set of national negotiations took place in 1971, under a Tory government. The Engineering Employers' Federation, playing its part in the general capitalist offensive of the period, broke off negotiations. The executive of the AUEW, rather than responding on a national scale, ruled that each factory should tackle its own management on the demands of the national claim. In this they were supported by the Broad Left.

In spite of the executive's position, militants in Manchester and Sheffield managed to hold their areas together and took on the employers on a district basis. In Manchester they banned piece-work and replied to lock-outs by occupying thirty plants. In the midst of this magnificent display of rank and file strength and determination, Scanlon descended on his old lair and announced that the executive had withdrawn the 35-hour week claim upon which the employers had refused to negotiate. Again the Broad Left chose not to criticise, let alone fight, the sell-out by the 'Left' leadership.

In 1972, the year of the miners' strike which ended when engineers in the West Midlands struck in sympathy, the AUEW executive delayed the pay claim so that it would not coincide with that of the miners. More accurately, so that united and concerted action by both engineers and miners, which would almost certainly have drawn in other sections as well, would not confront and destroy the Tory government. After all the loyalty of the bureaucracy is not to any particular

party but to the stability of capitalism generally.

In November of 1973, the continuing militancy of the rank and file in the AUEW brought the union into conflict with the National Industrial Relations Court, set up under the

Tories' Industrial Relations Act. On November 5th, 350,000 engineers struck against the imposition of a £75,000 fine, despite the executive's refusal to call an all out strike. When the court imposed a further fine of £47,000 the following April, the ensuing strike wave was only halted when an anonymous figure paid the fine for the union - thus letting both the Tory government and the union leaders off the hook.

Under the Tories the leaders were forced, by a combination of rank and file pressure and the very real threat to the funds and organisations of the union itself, to adopt a relatively aggressive attitude. Under the Labour Government the position was greatly changed. The Broad Left's opposition to the Social Contract kept within the limits of protest and eventually Scanlon could throw the AUEW's vote behind the Government. In 1975 the true impact of the years of Broad Left control was seen when their candidates for the National Committee, Bob Wright and Jimmy Reid were defeated and the right wing made a comeback to the leadership. As a result Scanlon was able to say that, 'it reflected the mood of the membership' and that 'it must be good news for the government and the TUC'.

This demoralising effect of the policies of the Broad Left deepened as they sabotaged struggles that threatened the Labour government's attempts to make the working class pay the cost of developing capitalist instability. At the 'Leyland TUC' in April 1977, for example, they refused to support the toolmakers' strike and instead argued that they did not want to jeopardise the Labour government, only to convince it to carry out the policies it had been elected on. In this way they reinforced the idea that the Labour Party was the only alternative to the Tories and, therefore, had to be supported through thick and thin.

Ten years after the Broad Left got Scanlon elected by a concerted campaign of factory gate meetings and the organisation around its own newspaper, 'Engineering Voice', the fruits of their policy of not building a rank and file movement that could fight independently were revealed. At the 1977 TUC, Scanlon cast the 1¼ million votes of the engineers in favour of the 10% guideline in total opposition to the policy of the union - and got away with it. As a result the whole working class has had to suffer another year of wage cuts and cuts in living standards.

The policy of the Broad Left in the AUEW, personified by Scanlon but practised at all levels of the union by the Communist Party and its supporters has been disastrous. Although elected almost entirely on their promise of a meaningful national wages policy, they have never fought for one. Indeed, since 1972 the national pay claim has been largely irrelevant to the stronger sections of the union. Throughout their period of power they have been characterised by conciliation, shilly-shallying and the most thinly disguised sell-outs. The defeats and disappointments of the engineers are the logical result of the strategy of dependence on the 'Left' bureaucrats.

THE NEED FOR A FIGHTING PROGRAMME

A rank and file movement that can turn back the tide of right wing advance in the AUEW can only be built on the basis of a coherent strategy or programme. Central to such a programme must be the recognition that today's stakes are far higher than those of the Sixties. To fight for higher wages today genuinely means challenging bourgeois rights of control over industry. It means taking on the government, no matter whether it is Labour or Tory. In such a situation a movement that tries to limit the struggle of the rank and

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file to defensive actions within the limits of government policy or merely to persuading union leaders to ask for more, will not only fail but also allow further advances by the Right. Revolutionary Communists, therefore, have to fight for a programme that challenges the fundamental rights of the bosses and their state and, at the same time can repair the damage done to the rank and file organisations at shop floor level by the failure of the Broad Left's policies.

REFORMING THE UNION STRUCTURE

In many areas the branches and district committees of the union are dying through lack of contact with the shop floor. After four years of wage restraint, many shop stewards committees are in tatters. For the union to be given new life there must be a fight to get the branches based on the workplace, with meetings in firm's time. Shop stewards should form a majority on District Committees. District meetings of all shop stewards should be held at least bi-monthly in order to re-assert the importance of the directly elected shop floor representatives.

In order to counter the constant tendency for union officials to raise themselves above the control of their members, the rank and file should fight for them to be paid at the hourly rate of the union membership. In addition, to ensure they remain under the control of the shop floor, all union officials should be recallable by those who elected them. In any event their term of office should be the same as that of shop stewards, twelve months.

AGAINST GOVERNMENT WAGE CONTROLS

Merely bringing union officials under closer control by the membership will not guarantee the right policies or a thoroughgoing fight for them. A national pay claim for a minimum time rate of £100 is essential to restore living standards and rebuild the union nationally. The fight for control in this area must centre on protection against inflation. Shop stewards committees should formulate, on a monthly basis, the increase required to keep pace with the rising cost of living. In doing this they should draw in other bodies, for example tenants associations and women's organisations, in order to accurately assess the needs of their members and also to build the contacts and organisations that will be necessary to fight for the rises.

One of the key lessons from the last ten years is the effect of productivity deals on the strength of the rank and file. An immediate end must be put to all such deals, the workers cannot accept any responsibility for the profit or loss of individual capitalists.

THE FIGHT AGAINST RACIALISM

The cancer of racism is a threat to every worker. The rank and file movement must adopt policies which both draw black and immigrant workers into the organised labour movement and drive out of it the racist and fascist filth. It is impossible to fight for the interests of the working class and at the same time propagate racist ideas, the rank and file movement must fight for active racists and fascists to be thrown out of the labour movement. All candidates for election to positions in the union should be challenged on their position on racism.

The principle slogans in the fight against racism must be, opposition to all immigration controls, no free speech for fascists and for direct action to deprive them of it, for the right of black and immigrant workers to caucus separately within the union and for union support for black self-defence against racist and police attacks.

FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY

Real equal pay for women, together with genuine equal access to training and promotion, is a long way from being achieved. Within the union women's involvement must be fought for through campaigns for creche facilities at union meetings, for special training for women shop stewards and for the right of women to caucus separately. On this basis a genuine fight for equal pay and conditions can be launched by the union.

AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is a key weapon in the bosses' armoury, the threat of redundancy, short-time working and lay-off, has been used time and again to force workers to accept wage cuts and worsening working conditions. We must fight for official opposition to all closures, lay-offs, short-time working and redundancies. We deny the right of the bourgeoisie to alter production levels and the size of the workforce, against them we fight for workers' control of hiring and firing, for the occupation of all firms declaring redundancies and the nationalisation, without compensation and under workers' control of all firms that announce closures.

As the capitalists and their state try to make the workers pay the cost of restructuring British industry the fight for control will become ever more central. It must not be confused with participation, by which the bosses try to make workers co-responsible for decisions to increase profitability at the expense of the workers pay and conditions. The rank and file movement must oppose all such schemes and call instead for the right of the workers to veto any management decision that is not in the workers' interests. In order to develop and train the working class to seize control of the factories and organise production in its own interests, we must fight now for the right to inspect the books and accounts of the employers; for the right to oversee all decisions and reports that affect the running of the firm. In those companies where participation schemes already operate, as in British Leyland for example, the rank and file movement should campaign for immediate withdrawal.

In the fight against the attacks of the bourgeoisie and their state, no doubt orchestrated by Duffy and co. after he takes his position as president of the union, revolutionary communists must fight for these policies in all possible arenas. To fight effectively is to draw in those who do not yet accept many of our positions. We must fight alongside all such workers in every limited struggle, always seeking to compare the false strategies of the reformist leaders to those of the revolutionaries. In so doing we seek to build a united front to defend the immediate interests of the rank and file of the engineering union within which we will continue to fight for our positions and programme.

'Unity' Manoeuvres

The present period of capitalist crisis and instability has found its reflection in a profound disorientation of the far left. The failure of the major organisations (IMG, SWP(IS), WRP) to address programmatically the developing class struggle has resulted in a whole series of splits over questions of strategy and tactics. Such fragmentation of subjectively revolutionary forces is obviously unfortunate and incertain senses counter-productive. We should be clear, however, that there are no short cuts to regroupment, no magic formulas which can immediately regenerate and reunify the far left. Only the most intransigent struggle around key aspects of communist strategy and tactics can provide a firm basis for pulling together the far left. Over the last year or so a number of organisations have addressed themselves to problems of increasing fragmentation of the left. Unfortunately the approaches taken have been at best mistaken or at worst downright opportunist only serving to add further to the already existing confusion.

The IMG have been the most persistent and vocal of the unifiers. They argue that the political basis for regroupment already exists. None of the organisations to the left of the Communist Party have yet crossed class lines and whilst differences of tactics, 'style' and theory exist all these organisations stand within the tradition of revolutionary marxism. In practice this apparently plausible and non-sectarian approach can lead in only one direction - to the liquidation of revolutionary marxism. Regroupment on the basis espoused by the IMG could only result in an uneasy alliance of competing centrist tendencies liable to fly apart at its first serious test in the class struggle. The IMG reveal the opportunist nature of their unity drive very clearly in their analysis of the SWP(GB).

The IMG does not try to pretend that it has no differences with the SWP but these differences we are told are of a secondary nature. They should not in themselves be a barrier to unity. Since the SWP is a **revolutionary** organisation.. Paradoxically, in Socialist Challenge no 29, we find the following analysis:

"The dominant tradition of the Marxist left in Britain is one which was best summed up in a speech delivered at the recent conference of the SWP's 'Rank and File Movement'. The speaker concerned declared, to loud applause, 'if you look after the little things the big things look after themselves'".

The article goes on:

"... This tradition can be defined as national, economist sectarianism."

and that:

"The economist strategy can provide no answers".

So whilst the SWP are a group of "national, economist sectarians" who have "no answers" they are still revolutionary marxists. In fact the term economist refers to a trend in the workers movement which has a chronic tendency to tail the trade union activity of the class. Such a

trend, whilst it may use marxist terminology, has nothing in common with revolutionary marxism other than a subjective desire for socialism.

In an earlier article on the SWP the IMG argue:

"... the denial of the fact that the USSR is a workers state does not in itself lead to an abandonment of the interest of the working class. It is not equivalent to theories like Popular Frontism which do lead directly to renegacy."

So the IMG understand perfectly clearly that Popular Frontism is objectively anti-working class. But how did the IMG react to SWP's attempt to build an all class alliance against fascism (ie the Anti-Nazi League)? Rather than risk cutting themselves off from the possibilities of regroupment with the SWP, the IMG, mesmerised by the sight of 80,000 people on the streets, made a wholesale capitulation to this disastrous strategy. The editorial in Socialist Challenge no 44 (following the ANL carnival) was headed "Hats off to the SWP" and in it we were informed (in relation to the forthcoming ANL conference):

*"A conference devoted to discussing whether or not the ANL is a 'popular front' or similar rubbish would, in our opinion, be disastrous." We see here how the IMG's unity at any price approach renders it impotent in the face of a dramatic right turn by the SWP. And here two aspects of the IMG and "Unity" are highlighted. Firstly, their wish to regroup with non-marxist organisations means that it *must* mute its criticisms or soften them by arguing that the issues involved are only secondary ones; secondly, the IMG's attempt to build "broad alliances" in the name of the class struggle leads the IMG to a point where the unity itself is of greater importance than its political basis. Thus the IMG can ride the wave of the ANL without understanding that in essence it is a bourgeois political formation.*

But, the IMG will counter, did we not publish a full statement on the basis for revolutionary unity in Socialist Challenge no. 16? And, indeed, the IMG did publish such a document. If however, we look at it closely, we find that rather than a strategy for the working class, it is a series of abstract principles and general truisms which could indeed be adhered to by a number of organisations to the left of the CP.

Having stated that, "we do not believe that unity will be brought about simply by agreement on immediate tasks confronting us today", the IMG's basis for unity goes on to cover over or avoid key questions of revolutionary strategy and tactics that are crucial to arming the working class against the capitalist onslaught. For instance the IMG's conception of standing candidates on 'Class Struggle' (ie non-revolutionary) programmes does not receive a mention, no mention is made of the fake 'lefts' in the labour movement nor is any united front strategy outlined to combat workers illusions in them. The project for "building a mass women's movement" diplomatically leaves aside the question of whether this will be an "all class", "autonomous" movement or a working class women's movement built around a fighting programme. These issues and others are not *just* tactical questions, they determine

the way forward a revolutionary grouping argues for the working class to achieve the overthrow of capitalism. It is this failure to fight for regroupment on the basis of a communist, transitional programme which is the root of the IMG's opportunism.

The IMG show this clearly in the "Battle of Ideas" (2 February 1978). Of particular interest is the section which lists the "tactics" the IMG would fight for *inside* a unified organisation. Centrally we find "transitional demands" relegated to a tactic – indeed a "tactic" which may never see the light of day since the IMG are prepared to be a minority in this rather peculiar formation. For Workers Power transitional demands are the bedrock of the strategy for the working class seizure of power. The methodology developed by Lenin and the first four congresses of the Comintern and consolidated by Trotsky is the only basis upon which a revolutionary strategy can be elaborated. Lenin explicitly rejected the splitting of principles, strategy and tactics. Principles without strategy are maximalist, strategy without principles is directionless and the two without tactics are inoperable. The rejection of programme dooms any organisation; to the left and right zig-zags and ultimately to either wholesale capitulation or sectarian irrelevance. However, the IMG's projected unity with anti-Trotskyist groupings such as Big Flame, SWP or the International Socialist Alliance means that it is not possible for this cornerstone of Marxism to be a condition of that unity.

Given that the IMG do not believe that organisations need to be won to the basic precepts of Trotskyism it is not surprising that they are prepared to unite with organisations who have no conception of internationalism, or, to be more precise, of the need for an international revolutionary organisation. This is reflected in the IMG's new found "modesty" regarding the USFI in its unity statement. "Such a (unified revolutionary) organisation must seek to build and become part of a revolutionary international". Membership of the USFI would not then be a condition on which unity would be accepted or rejected: "We would therefore argue that a unified organisation after a period of discussion and experience, applies to affiliate to the FI". (Battle of Ideas 2 February 1978). And if the organisation decides *not* to affiliate would the IMG have to split (heaven forbid!) If so was the unity principled in the first place? If not it merely indicates the contempt the IMG has for the USFI and its complete dishonesty with regard to its own membership – many dissident elements have remained within the IMG on the basis (or more often excuse) that it is affiliated to the USFI. Clearly the present leadership don't take this affiliation very seriously.

Given that the IMG are prepared to join an organisation which has no position on programme, the united front, socialist democracy or internationalism (re above article) it is hardly surprising that when its Socialist Unity electoral bloc moves into action it should be on a basis often indistinguishable from left social democracy. Socialist Unity is not a united front, it is a rotten electoral bloc based on left reformist politics which offers no real alternative to the Labour Party.

The IMG are not the only organisation talking about unity. Having rejected Trotskyism as the basis for unity the IMG have been able to attract the fallen angels of the International Socialist Alliance who, having been cast out of the SWP(GB), are busy looking for a new home. (Or as a recent article in Socialist Challenge more candidly put it, an organisation "in search of an early grave" – something the IMG can undoubtedly provide them with.) Prominent in this new formation is Martin Shaw who attacks the SWP on the mistaken basis that it has broken from the hallowed IS tradition. In fact Shaw has simply noticed, rather late in the day, that the SWP is a bureaucratically deformed, sectarian organisation. Inside the SWP Shaw called for a return to the positions of the late '60s when the SWP (IS), on paper at least, saw the need for regroupment in terms not altogether distinct from those used by the IMG today. So Shaw, on finding himself outside the SWP, has little choice but to argue that the next step in the "IS tradition" (as embodied by the founding ISA

conference) is to join the IMG. The majority of the ISA rejected immediate fusion with the IMG not on any clear political basis but rather on the basis of a suspicion of the IMG/USFI acquired inside the SWP/IS. However, sections of this grouping are attracted to the IMG by the softest positions on the unity campaign. Thus Martin Shaw congratulates the IMG on its: "commitment to non-exclusive class struggle tendencies in the unions ... as well as work in other movements – such as the women's movement". (Battle of Ideas 13 April 1978).

The "non-exclusive class struggle tendencies in the unions" which are so attractive to the ISA are of course designed to encompass all those, particularly the 'left leaders', who are 'willing to fight' the government's anti-working class policies, (or at least who *say* they are willing to fight). Such tendencies have to be based on left reformist programmes with a minimum commitment to action in order not to drive away these 'class fighters'. In the women's movement the IMG capitulate to both "revolutionary" and socialist feminism placing the "unity" of the women's movement above a serious fight for communist politics. Thus with reference to gays and the women's movement the IMG inform us:

"... we do insist that these movements have an autonomous role and cannot be subordinated *politically* (our emphasis – WP) or organisationally to the revolutionary movement" (Battle of Ideas 2 February 1978). So Martin Shaw, having failed to realise that the "IS tradition" is rotten to the core, is drawn inexorably to the latest manifestation of that rotteness in the IMG. Similarly we find that the Workers League (who in many respects embody the most backward, economistic notions of the SWP) are attracted to the IMG for the same reasons. Stephen Marks (WL) praised the IMG for its "modesty" regarding the USFI, for breaking from "..... traditional obsessions with putting socialist demands on labour" (Battle of Ideas 15 April 1978) and because IMG formulations on transitional demands are so hazy as to resemble the WL's conception of "transitional politics" as a series of systematic concessions to reformism. Richard Kirkwood (WL) has argued in Socialist Challenge that the sort of newspaper required by a united organisation should be one that sounds suspiciously like the Socialist Worker of a few years ago which far from being a communist newspaper, was little more than a scrapbook of strikes. The various groupings around the ISA are looking to the IMG as the reincarnation of all the worst aspects of their beloved "IS tradition".

The I-CL have a rather more critical approach to the IMG unity offensive – although it is often very confused. At one level the I-CL offer a view of unity identical (if rather more to the left) to that of the IMG. The I-CL argue:

"It is the major issues, the issues which concentrate the minds of revolutionaries which should decide fusions, splits and organisation demarcations". (Theses on Revolutionary Unity: International Communist no. 7), and:

"... it is the duty of revolutionaries to actively seek out the links in the chain of events which will organise the maximum number of revolutionary militants around a programme that is minimally adequate." (reference as above) We are informed that the major organisations to the left of the CP are all revolutionary in essence but have, by virtue of a series of blunders, obscured their revolutionary nature with "fakery";

"The major groups of the revolutionary left – IMG, SWP, WSL in Britain, and nearly all the Trotskyist current internationally – have fallen into *fakery* on particular issues: *yet their political positions as such would not prevent revolutionary unity with them*" (our emphasis – WP) (reference as above).

So far the I-CL have put a position virtually identical to that of the IMG. If, however, we look elsewhere we find a different trend interwoven. The article "For revolutionary unity on a revolutionary programme" (IC no. 7) is a reply to the IMG's "The Basis for Revolutionary Unity". Here we find the major weakness of the I-CL's approach. The I-CL fail to tackle the IMG's unity offensive in its entirety but prefer to

present a number of suggestions for how it can be improved. However, the article does recognise the centrality of key tactics for revolutionary unity. In particular the document takes up the questions of a revolutionary orientation to reformism and the general strike as well as a number of principles such as solidarity with the Republican struggle in Ireland. The positive side of the I-CL's approach is an empirical recognition of the interwoven nature of principles, strategy and tactics but because this is not understood methodologically (ie the I-CL can only understand programme as a series of timeless truisms and a jumble of tactics – WP 5) they fail to break free from the IMG's problematic. Thus in IC no. 8 we find ridiculous statements like:

"... the IMG is a revolutionary organisation in the general sense (?) but one which persistently makes opportunist errors, often serious ones."

The I-CL are *beginning* to step back from characterising the IMG as centrist, and are at a crossroads as regards their notions of unity. Either the I-CL will understand that unity cannot be forged on the basis of abstract principle alone or they run the risk of becoming the left wing in the IMG's version of "Socialist Unity".

Having pointed to the erroneous nature of the IMG/ISA/I-CL approach to unity it remains to lay down a number of guidelines. Unity cannot be consolidated on a politically inadequate basis; a revolutionary organisation cannot hold itself together unless it is capable of providing answers to all the major problems facing the working class. These "answers" are what constitute the backbone of a revolutionary programme. The programme is structured around a series of communist principles, (eg opposition to class collaboration). Strategic goals (eg the dictatorship of the proletariat) and key notions for achieving these goals (eg united front, "rank and file" movements). These three aspects of programme cannot be arbitrarily separated. No amount of tactical expediency can make up for a lack of communist principles, or failure to understand strategy (the "Eurocommunists" are probably the best example. Having ditched internationalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, they now seek to introduce socialism via the capitalist state). Neither will a lack of tactical expertise be overcome by an ever more rigid

adherence to principle – this is the road of ultimatism. The IMG relegate tactics to a secondary place. In practice this allows the IMG to duck the major issues. The IMG fight to build "class struggle tendencies" in the unions. This they would say was a tactic to draw wider forces into a struggle against capitalism. In actual fact this tactic results in the IMG capitulating to the left bureaucrats and failing to fight for a communist fraction in the unions. (WP's approach to "rank and file" will be dealt with in detail in our next journal). Thus the tactical approach of the IMG in the TUs means that they opt out of a principled fight against reformism – in fact, they become complicit in the construction of reformist rather than communist fractions in the unions. Similarly in the struggle against fascism the IMG with its unity "tactic" has collapsed into an alliance based on purely bourgeois politics – the Anti Nazi League. Once again, the IMG's tactics (those secondary features) have resulted in a failure to fight for communist politics. Workers Power have always argued that key tactics must play a major part in regroupment. Such tactics however, are subordinate to the strategic goal and are only useful if they assist in the struggle for socialism. If two organisations cannot agree on how to fight fascism, construct a communist current in the unions, win women to communist politics, orientate to reformism, construct an international revolutionary organisation or indeed a national one, then certainly these organisations have little or no basis for unity. That is not to say that differences cannot exist within a revolutionary organisation or that a revolutionary organisation could not make a mistake or even a series of blunders. However, a simple recognition of the fallibility of human beings should not be allowed to draw up into philistinism. Where erroneous practices become systemised they signify a move away from marxism. In the case of the IMG this centrism has been demonstrated by its persistent adaptation to non-communist movements and its consequent failure to fight for revolutionary positions. This practice is reflected in the IMG's new opportunist tactic, a tactic based on accommodation to anti-Trotskyist forces. For Workers Power the key to regroupment is a hard fight around key aspects of communist strategy and tactics to *break* existing organisations from their centrist and/or opportunist practices.



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this way for a Popular Front

The present period of capitalist crisis has created circumstances conducive to the growth of fascism and the 'popularisation' of racist ideas. At the same time recent events have shown that there are increasing numbers prepared to openly oppose the National Front and its activists. The ANL carnivals are sufficient evidence of that.

However this anti-racist, anti-fascist energy stands to be dissipated unless it is welded into a force capable of actually smashing the fascist threat. Since Lewisham, the successful mass mobilisation, that prevented the N.F. from marching, the left (in particular the SWP and IMG) has retreated into a liberal, propogandist approach to fighting fascism as exemplified by the Anti-Nazi League and the Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee. The size of individual ANL demonstrations and dances must not blind revolutionaries as to the real tasks facing us - to forge a Workers United Front against racism and fascism capable of integrating the political and physical struggle necessary for the working class counter-offensive.

All past experience has shown that the central objective of the fascist movement is the complete destruction of working class organisation for the benefit of capitalism. Fascism first arises as the organisational and political expression of the exasperated middle strata and recruits into its ranks sections of the lumpen proletariat. The politics of fascism are thus the politics of the middle strata; nationalism, racialism, anti-communism and a yearning to return to the days of the "free-market" economy. In short, fascist politics are a grotesque reflection of the ideology of the capitalist class. It is therefore the case that the fascists cannot be opposed on the basis of bourgeois political conceptions but only by policies

which reflect the interests of the working class, ie internationalism, anti-racism and communism. It is also the case that the struggle against fascism is part and parcel of the battle between capital and labour. This strategic alliance between anti-fascists and sections of capital are not just ludicrous but positively suicidal.

The workers united front must be capable of striking at the roots of fascism by opposing racism and nationalism in all their manifestations. At the moment it is the Tories who are making the major gains through racism with the aim of weakening the labour movement by dividing it along lines of ethnic origin. But the Labour Party, with their appeals to the national interest, are equally complicit in stoking the racist fire. The recent select committee report calling for tighter immigration controls was as much the responsibility of the Labourites (in particular ANL sponsor Sidney Bidwell), as the Tories. To oppose racism and nationalism head-on, the workers united front must adopt a position of *opposition to all immigration controls*. Any position short of this gives tacit support to the oppression of ethnic minorities in the working class. Further we must argue that there is no place in the labour movement for those who wish to weaken or destroy it. *All fascists and active racists should be prevented from taking official positions (or removed if they already hold them) and expelled from the union.*

We should not forget that in essence fascism is a military force. The racist murders and attacks, the bomb attacks on workers organisations and individual anti-fascist militants all testify to this. We cannot and must not rely upon the State to protect us. We should not be so foolish as to believe that the police will protect black people or that the state can ban the fascists. In fact the police defend the fascists and systematically intimidate immigrant communities; the State as an arm of capitalism cannot and will not ban fascism. Where bans have been imposed they must have

Notes

affected all marches and served to demobilise the anti-fascist offensive. We must build active *support in the labour movement for black self-defence*. In recognising the military nature of fascism, the working class cannot allow the fascists to organise. We have to be prepared to prevent fascists from holding meetings and every time fascists appear on the streets anti-fascists should be mobilising to stop them marching. *Effectively, this means we give the fascists no platform for their racist outpourings.*

The existing anti-fascist organisations are manifestly incapable of fulfilling these tasks. The ANL, whilst having drawn 80,000 people to a carnival cannot by its nature seriously tackle the questions of racialism or physical confrontation with the fascists.

It is a popular frontist coalition of those calling themselves socialist and even 'revolutionary' and non-working class elements. Its programme is one sufficient to hold this motley alliance together and, as such, inevitably cannot mount any serious challenge to the mobilisations of the fascists. Its platform is pacifist - openly courting a response after Lewisham "among the many thousands of people who hated the Nazis but disapproved of the Socialist Workers Party's strategy of physically confronting them on the streets." (A. Callinicos in Socialist Review No 3) It is no surprise therefore that, the *very day* after the first ANL Carnival the fascists of the N.F. marched in London with no resistance from the ANL.

Socialist Challenge argued, very dishonestly, that the organisers of the carnival did not know the exact time, place and date of the fascist march and so were unable to mobilise against it. Socialist Worker was content to comment the National Front could only put together a few hundred bedraggled people, who had to march in the rain whereas the ANL had 80,000 people and sunshine as well! Peter Hain (the ANL press officer) in his interview in Socialist Challenge No 45 came closer to giving the game away when he said: "It was a secret march that we'd got wind of before. But realistically, all the energy and organisation that had gone into the carnival had just exhausted everyone."

In reality the ANL would have had no physical difficulty in organising a counter-demonstration - rather it was *politically* incapable. If the ANL were to openly support physical confrontation with the fascists its liberal and Stalinist supporters would be driven away.

The kow-towing of the ANL to second-world war chauvinist propaganda - "Hitler's policies led straight to the Second World War . . . Tyndall is trying to do the same." (ANL leaflet 'Why you should oppose the National Front'), their open alliance with those, such as Sid Bidwell, who are complicit in institutionalised racist legislative recommendations render them incapable of fighting the fascist and racist threat. Alex Callinicos made this plain when he argued that "in the abstract, perfectly correct" (sic) demands such as "opposition to all immigration controls and no platform for fascists" must be opposed as policy positions for the ANL because, if adopted, they would "kill it stone dead". An organisation that faces death if it adopts the only policies that can lay the basis for an effective fight against racism and fascism is an obstacle to the building of a Workers United Front. Only by driving out of its ranks its chauvinist and racist supporters could the ANL take a step forward - and this the "revolutionaries" of the SWP will fight tooth and nail to prevent.

In short the ANL is an alliance subordinated to acceptable bourgeois politics in the search for alliance on a pacifist and

nationalist programme. The fact that the ANL has made a turn to workplace orientation does not in the least alter this. The result can only be to tie whole sections of workers willing to fight fascism politically and organisationally to a bankrupt coalition with sections of the bourgeoisie.

Recognising the ANL as a roadblock, as well as the enormous potential existing to take the struggle against racism and fascism forward, Workers Power attended the Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee conference with clear and concrete proposals. Our motion called for the ARAFCC to not affiliate to the ANL while supporting individual ANL activities on their merits. Instead we called for the ARAFCC to summon a Labour Movement delegate conference to lay the organisational and political basis for a Workers United Front against Racism and Fascism. ARAFCC was to approach the ANL to ensure joint cooperation in building the conference while fighting for a principled programme against that of the ANL.

The forces in attendance at the ARAFCC conference could have prevented a stampede into the popular frontism of the ANL. They could have laid the political basis for a principled alternative. They chose not to do so. Instead a resolution prompted by the IMG was passed uncritically endorsing the ANL and offering ARAFCC assistance. While dreaming of a division of labour within which the ANL fought the fascists and the ARAFCC took on racism, it too refused to adopt a principled programme with which to challenge the racist threat. Compounded by organisational proposals from the petty-bourgeois Big Flame group which commit the ARAFCC to building "regions first" in preparation for a national federal structure the ARAFCC failed every single test before it. It is left as no more than a collection of local committees, usually composed of interested individuals committed to liberal anti-racist campaigns and with no perspective for rooting itself in the labour movement.

For our refusal to bow to the populism of the ANL and the liberalism of the ARAFCC we were roundly condemned as sectarians. But it was not just the IMG who condemned us - so too did the I-CL. While recognising the limitations of the ANL they describe it in the leaflet given out at the conference as "a big step forward", arguing for those present at the ARAFCC conference to constitute themselves as a left faction inside the ANL. Their resolution explicitly called for local Anti-Racist Committees to become local branches of the ANL.

What the I-CL forget to say, in their haste to be on the left of the "new movement" billed by all from the Guardian to Socialist Challenge and Socialist Workers as bound to be the "biggest thing" since CND, is that the ANL is an obstacle to mobilising new forces against the fascist threat, that it was, and is, the task of communists to direct those forces who want to fight fascism away from pacifist and chauvinist leaders of the ANL towards the building of a Workers United Front against Racism and Fascism. The ARAFCC had an opportunity to do just that, it failed to do so.

For our part Workers Power will continue to oppose any organisational and political subordination of local anti-racist committees to the ANL while fighting against all manifestations of cretinous parochialism and liberalism in the local committees. We will lend our support to all fighting to force the ANL to break with its chauvinist and pacifist supporters, to adopt a principled programme against the racists and fascists. Unless these tasks are performed, are fought for vigorously and as a matter of urgency, the tremendous success of the Lewisham mobilisation, the real possibility of drawing a whole new layer of anti-racist working class youth into struggle will have been squandered in the popular front of the ANL.

The Fight for a Working Class Womens Movement

We publish here three documents produced by Workers Power during our involvement in the National Working Women's Charter Campaign. The Campaign's Third Conference which took place on 17th June 1978 marked the final extinction of whatever potential the campaign once possessed as a fighting women's organisation based in the Trade Unions. "Why the Charter has collapsed" was produced and circulated in the campaign in February 1978 by our comrades in response to the collapse of many Charter groups, the virtual boycott of the campaign by the IMG, and the withdrawal from the Charter of the I-CL. The document deals with the history of the national campaign starting in 1976 with a conference of 300 delegates, including a small but significant number of TU women, and goes on to document how the political strategy adopted by the IMG, the largest left group in the Charter, led the campaign into a crisis. The IMG's conception of building a "broad class struggle alliance" led them consistently to oppose any amendment of the Charter programme in case it would offend 'sympathetic' trade union leaders who they were trying to woo to the campaign. For the same reasons they took no part in attempting to build Charter fractions in the unions which would have immediately had to fight those self-same bureaucrats. At the same time they were unwilling to take any step which might upset their socialist feminist allies who, while they remained in the campaign, were consistently hostile to an orientation towards working class women.

"Why the Charter has collapsed" proposed a different strategy involving the adoption of a fighting programme for the Charter that could link the present struggles for abortion rights, equal pay, the right to work, etc. to the struggle for workers control, for political equality; to the struggle for socialism and women's liberation. A programme providing clear direction in struggle, Charter fractions in the unions and a national newspaper coordinating such a campaign could, we argued, have offered the possibility of actively intervening in the struggles of women trade unionists drawing the activists into the ranks of the campaign. The strategy adopted only disillusioned the modest numbers who attended Charter groups and conferences. We invited the I-CL, who are formally committed to building a working class women's movement around a fighting programme, to join with us to fight for this orientation against the IMG. But the I-CL refused, preferring to leave without a fight and without any alternative operative strategy for building such a movement themselves.

It was in this situation that we put forward to the June Conference the action programme and commentary, which seeks to put into context and explain the demands of the programme which we present here. Previously at the 1977 conference, when the possibility existed of building the Charter as a campaign involving individual women's movement and Trade Union activists, and with a serious potential of forming Charter groups in the unions, Workers Power had put forward an amended Charter which could have been the basis for united action between organisations - political groups and trade unions which differed widely on other questions. However this unity did not emerge, both the affiliated unions and the major affiliated political group (the IMG) put little or nothing into the campaign. The recent conference called to try and 'revive' the campaign met facing a situation where much of these possibilities had been lost.

The conference represented a meeting of activists of the campaign, most of whom regarded themselves as revolutionary socialists and as such we argued in a leaflet to the conference the choice was, "either to adopt a distinctive and effective strategy to fight for in the women's and Trade Union movement, or to break up into the various campaigns of these movements." It was in this context that we put forward a programme which we believe addressed the central questions that such a movement must face. What strategy and tactics meet the

present offensive? What is the role of working class women in the struggle for women's liberation? What can women expect from the left Trade Union leaders? The conference in which the IMG held the majority of delegates rejected such an approach, arguing that such a "full socialist programme" was for revolutionaries, whilst they were in favour of building the broadest possible movement, winning "as many friends as possible" in the Trade Union movement. The IMG strategy, opportunist to the core, aims to launch a broad women's paper, not of course counterposed to any of the existing campaigns, focussing on the Trade Unions - an approach which clearly came across as leaving questions of women's liberation to the women's movement, while concentrating on economic issues effecting women in the unions. It was on the basis of these adopted policies that Workers Power withdrew from the Charter Campaign at the conference.

Whilst a united front between revolutionaries and militant women trade unionists whose political allegiance is still given to the Labour Party can be formed on a single issue or on a limited series of issues - a grouping of would-be revolutionaries has no business hiding behind a reformist platform. Ridiculousness is added to opportunism when that platform has no supporters except themselves. The June Conference presented the ludicrous spectacle, hitherto reserved for the SWP Economists, of IMG members pretending to be pure and simple trade unionists - uttering such gems as that "consciousness comes from action" and asking theoretically "how can I take this programme into my trade union branch?" Whilst the Charter represented in however limited a way a united front with reformist women trade unionists it had some value. Even then it was the duty of revolutionaries to keep its platform, and policy sharply oriented to the key struggles of the day - raising demands which met the pressing needs of women and which put the bureaucrats to the test before their mobilised members. This we attempted to do at the national conferences in 1976 and 1977 - at the trade union day school in Nov. 1977 and through the pages of 'Women's Fight'. The IMG strategy progressively sapped the potential for united *action* within the framework of the campaign. The June Conference was therefore little more than a belated post-mortem. The Socialist Challenge headline 'Breathing Back Life into the Patient' contains an unconscious irony coming from the chief agent of the Charter Campaign's demise.

The 'realistic' intervention of the I-CL continued their policy of giving 'left' cover to the IMG. From November onwards 'realism' showed the Charter to be already dead and any attempt to rebuild it or to fight the IMG fruitless - better to keep silent and hope the IMG or the SWP would launch another women's campaign to act as a flaccid left critic within - a milieu they seem to have found in the SWP journal 'Women's Voice'.

Both the IMG and the I-CL accuse us of sectarianism. Not so. We will fight alongside women in struggle be they reformist or centrist - be it on a single issue or in groupings within the unions on limited or inadequate programmes. But we will not 'sink our differences' with Reformism and Centrism because we know these present a disastrous strategy or no strategy at all for working class women. We will, as we did at the last conference of the WWCC propagandise for our programme *as a whole*, as a coherent strategy for the struggle for women's liberation and socialism. We will demand of groups like the IMG and the I-CL what their programme amounts to. But we do not stop there - we are not abstract propagandists or sterile sectarians. We know our programme to be an operative one and we will fight for its demands and conceptions in every struggle as they apply to that struggle. We call on all those who agree with this perspective to join us in the fight to build a revolutionary communist current in the women's and trade union movement.

THE WORKING WOMENS CHARTER CAMPAIGN COLLAPSES

The Working Women's Charter Campaign has collapsed. There are only two or three geographical groups still in existence, *Women's Fight* is no longer being produced, and the Secretariat, owing to the de facto withdrawal of most of its members, has stopped meeting. What has happened in the WWCC since its inception in 1974 that has led to this collapse?

The Working Women's Charter was drawn up by the London Trades Council (now defunct) by a group of CP activists, with the specific intention of taking a series of united immediate women's demands into the trade union movement. The emphasis was primarily on adoption by national trade unions, to push these unions into doing something for women. But a number of women, active both in the women's movement and the Trade Union movement, saw the Charter as a potential force linking women's oppression in the home with her oppression in the workplace. They recognised the necessity for a campaign to build support for the demands of the Charter at a *local* level. The International Marxist Group were prominent in pushing this approach. Thus the Working Women's Charter Campaign was born and local geographical groups formed. At this point, the CP and the national unions realised that the WWCC represented a potential for organising a *fight* in an organised way at a *rank and file* level and disassociated themselves from the campaign.

The Charter Campaign until the adoption of a national structure and newspaper in 1976, was extremely amorphous, lacking the ability to tackle the very real problems facing women through attacks on living standards, abortion rights, unemployment, or to organise working class women to take up these issues. The differences in political outlook of those active in the Campaign, the problems of organising, were clouded over by the lowest common denominator approach symbolised by the Charter itself. As the situation changed this document was becoming more and more inadequate even as a list of immediate reforms. It did not take up women's most pressing needs. For example 'A Woman's Right to Work' was not included, nor a demand for free abortion on demand, the sex discrimination legislation was overlooked, cuts in social expenditure were ignored, and most importantly, so was the necessity of building women's caucuses in the unions.

Thus at the first National Conference held in 1976 attended by over 300 delegates there was a very firm commitment to tackle these problems and re-orient the Campaign to take into account the changing political situation. The IMG, the largest political grouping in the Campaign, did not disagree with the *principle* of amending the Charter. Far from it. They participated in drawing up a new Charter which was *passed* at the 1976 Conference and so became 'policy' of the Campaign. But this could not become the new Working Women's Charter there and then. No, it had to be discussed 'by the labour movement' first and a new Conference held before that could happen.

Why did the IMG place this seemingly contradictory position before the Campaign? The answer is simple. The IMG could agree with the amendments 'in principle', but when it came to fighting for these principles in the working class that was another matter. They proposed instead a campaign to woo the leaders of those same unions who had already rejected the Campaign around the Charter *into* the Campaign. The IMG believed, wrongly as events have shown, that by further *discussion* — discussion not a struggle — those leaders would see the error of their ways.

This approach is disastrous. The trade union bureaucracy is a privileged broker between Capital and Labour, constantly subordinating working class interests to maintain the status quo within which they operate. An integral part of this status quo is the oppression of women — reflected in the indifference and hostility they face in the TUs. The bureaucrats can be no reliable support for working class women fighting for their rights — indeed they are their *principle enemy* within the working class. This 'general truth' is intensified and sharpened at a time of economic and political crisis. The TUC is willing to stab any section of workers in the back to preserve the anti-working class Labour Government. The Trade Union lefts, who talk about women's rights will only act under pressure of independent rank and file mobilisation and their inability in the final analysis to break with Labourism makes them treacherous allies. The key lesson is to warn women that they, with help from rank and file male trade unionists, must take control of their own struggles. And in 1977 this was borne out by the attitude of the AUEW (who have adopted the Charter) bureaucracy's attitude towards the Trico strike — refusing to provide creche facilities for the women strikers, limiting the role of the women in the strike to a passive one, not fighting to bring the male workers in the factory out on strike and not calling for solidarity strike action. And it was the NUPE officials who sabotaged the occupation of the Weir Maternity hospital in South London, APEX officials and the TUC who sold out Grunwick.

The IMG's adaptation to reformism in the Trade Union movement is exemplified by their conception of the 'Women's Rights Rally' called and mainly organised by the Working Women's Charter Campaign. The IMG saw the Rally as an assessment of the Government's legislation in a totally passive way. 2,000 people meeting together on as broad a level as possible to recognise that the government's legislation is inadequate. The necessity for choosing key question and hammering out tactics to warn of the pitfalls and mobilise working women to go beyond the legislation was rejected by the IMG. They wanted to draw together reformists, TU bureaucrats, labour lefts etc in the 'broadest possible way'. This could only be done around the conception of a broad-based 'rally'. All this was done under the cover of the 'united front'. However, a United Front is effective on the condition that it involves *action* by the reformist leaders' mass organisations. The IMG's role for the Charter Campaign was to focus on building 'women's rights committees' to look at the legislation. These committees had no particular campaigning function or relation to the WWCC or working class rank and file committees. It need hardly surprise us that only one was built and that it didn't survive for very long!

Since the WWCC Conference in 1976 only two more national unions have affiliated to the Campaign — NATFHE and COHSE — under pressure from their members. For a national union, adoption, and even affiliation, to the WWC meant that they had done their bit for women's rights.

But despite this major setback in not amending the Charter, the WWCC began to produce a national newspaper, which even though it appeared irregularly, did provide a national orientation for the Campaign. The elected secretariat was able to some degree coordinate activity and provide leadership and guidance around the policy of the WWCC. This proved important during the Trico strike where the Charter made the most gains in doing solidarity work, publicising the strike, fighting the TU bureaucracy and raising issues with some of the women.

The importance of the Working Women's Charter Campaign was its potential in building the basis of a movement of working class women. At a time when the working class fight against the attacks of capitalism was being sabotaged at every point; when the women's movement was in the main increasingly turning its back on the working class, the WWCC represented activists who were prepared to fight in an organised way against the particular oppression of working class women under capitalism and the specific attacks on women.

But a movement based on working class women cannot be built on good intentions alone. We need firstly a fighting programme that addresses women's particular problems and needs, linking it to the question of the possibility of working class power. This programme will have to be flexible to key into the changing situation and to guide the activists prepared to fight around its demands. Secondly is the necessity to organise women in the workplace as the leading activists around the programme. This is not because they are more or less oppressed, but because they also have the potential to organise together inside the workplace and in their unions, and because they have a higher level of class consciousness than the 'isolated housewife'.

Therefore with this perspective what was central in the WWCC was to build groups of Charter supporters in the unions and workplaces linking up with the groups based in the community. Inextricably related to this was the need to amend the inadequate Charter into a programme for women and to focus the campaign nationally with an elected leadership and organising newspaper.

The 1977 conference did not do these things. The preceding year had seen the disorientation of Charter activists faced with two Charters. Many groups collapsed and work in the unions around women's oppression dwindled. The IMG blind to the errors of their wooing of the TU bureaucracy dug their heels in and came out against amending the Charter at all (ever?). But now they had a new element to woo. The Socialist Feminists, who had begun to reject an orientation to working class women, especially women in the workplace, and had started to move back into the broad-based autonomous Women's Liberation Movement. An example of this was their rejection of the demand for 'A Woman's Right to Work'. The IMG, terrified of splitting the autonomous WLM, were unable to publicly disagree with the Socialist Feminists. If the Charter was not amended they anticipated that the Socialist Feminists would stay inside the WWCC and the TU bureaucrats and labour lefts could still be cajoled into the Campaign. This did not happen! The Socialist Feminists left the WWCC en masse and the TU bureaucrats despite months of such wooing, have yet to be won and so the IMG or at least most of its activists, has followed suit and dropped the WWCC.

How did the IMG justify their position? By underplaying the Charter's demands to an abstraction of "the *principle* which is embodied in them" leading them to define it as "not a definitive programme of demands, but a banner for the fight for women's rights, which draws behind it the widest possible forces" and "instead of arguing for the need for amendment of wording we should emphasise the task of forging unity in action on specific aspects of women's rights". Having relegated

the demands of the Charter itself to irrelevant wording, the IMG relegate the campaign to debate and discussion. "The existence of Charter campaigning groups and the propaganda actions of the Campaign have ensured continued debate on the Charter issues in the labour movement. The influence of these debates is already seen in a revised TUC Charter". What these *debates* mean for the IMG is that "the Charter demands allow an audience for the initiative and arguments of the WLM far wider than anything previously existing", and "has allowed women most active in the fight for the Charter to exchange their experiences and co-ordinate their activities". For the IMG the Charter is *only* "a radical section of a much broader, less politically committed movement around the Charter demands". Implicit in these statements is the dissolution of the Campaign itself as an active force. The IMG are totally unable to recognise the necessity for a programme to build action around or that the most conscious sections of the working class will lead that action.

At the Conference held in 1977 the IMG tried to dissolve the elected Secretariat and argued against building groups of Charter supporters in the Unions, on the grounds that this would alienate existing women's committees etc. Having attempted to dissolve the Charter into the amorphous tradition of the autonomous women's movement the IMG have now set their sights on the Socialist Feminist current. Over the past months the IMG have virtually withdrawn from all local Charter groups, did no work to build for the Trade Union school, have not participated in the production of *Women's Fight*, only sold it under pressure from other members of the Secretariat, and have boycotted the WWCC almost totally in *Socialist Challenge*. The only work the IMG has done in the campaign has been carried out by individual members in Hull and Oxford.

The WWCC was left after the last conference in a very weak position indeed. Saddled with a pitiful list of inadequate demands and with no active support from the IMG, Charter activists were at a loss. Charter groups became more and more isolated and paralysed. Nevertheless, support for the WWCC at a rank and file level was still strong enough for the Trade Union school held last November to attract 80 people from different unions. Although the 1977 Conference passed a resolution committing the campaign to build fractions in the unions and the Trade Union school has shown the forces are there to do this in certain unions, this was not possible without the commitment of the secretariat to organise the work and of the political organisations involved in the Campaign to help carry it out.

The production of *Women's Fight* on a regular basis demonstrated the usefulness of a campaigning newspaper. But again without the support of the largest political organisation in the Campaign the paper's collapse was only a matter of time. In the face of these difficulties the International Communist League's will crumbled. Thus the second largest organisation in the Campaign, rather than fight to either push the IMG towards a commitment to the Charter or expose their record and political capitulation to feminism and left reformist leaders, withdrew from *Women's Fight* and the Charter Secretariat, bringing about their final collapse. The IMG bears the responsibility for the disorientation and failure of the WWCC, but the I-CL by their refusal to fight them, have turned their back on those left in and around the Charter.

THE WAY FORWARD

There is no denying that the WWCC in its existing form has failed. Hull Charter Group in proposing to change the structure of the Campaign towards a regional 'democratic' one, in the mistaken belief that the problems of the Campaign was over-centralisation and hierarchy, have grossly over-estimated

the extent of support the Campaign has. The reality is that the majority of Charter groups rejected an orientation to working class women in favour of the Socialist Feminist current. The Campaign does not have the resources or committed activists to continue as before. We believe that a Conference should be organised to re-build the WWCC on a *new basis*. The Trade Union school demonstrated that the Charter does still have some support, but it is fragmented and isolated. This support needs to be organised primarily through the formation of Charter groups based in the workplace.

And a new fighting programme needs to be worked out at this Conference if the WWCC is to go forward. The new programme has to demonstrate the campaign's potential for

fighting for women's needs here and now and facing the political questions of the bureaucracy of the unions, the labour government and working class power. Only in this way will it regain the forces that have been lost — on a new fighting footing.

It will mean having a *national structure*, a campaigning newspaper and an elected leadership. We would urge the I-CL, IMG and all ex-Charter activists and groups to support our call for a Conference on this basis, to rebuild the Working Women's Charter Campaign.

Jill Daniels — Workers Power
(Editor, *Women's Fight*)
(February 1978)

Women's Liberation and the Working Class

WORKERS' POWER'S background paper to the Working Women's Charter Campaign Conference June 1978.

Women's Oppression and Class Society

The systematic social oppression of women has its origins in a very early period of human development. Its roots lie however, not in some 'natural' or biological division between the sexes. There is no intrinsic connection between women as child-bearer and her unequal position relative to men. The reason for women's age-old condemnation to child-rearing, domestic tasks, and exclusion from control of all the key areas of society lies in the period when class antagonisms based on the emergence of private property broke up the primitive community. The male-dominated class societies or patriarchies, seized from women the control of their own fertility, cast onto them the whole responsibility of childrearing (up to the age of 'manhood') and created a family within which women's productive labour was at the disposal of the 'patriarchs'. These basic features of women's oppression continued through the various modes of production - barbarism, slave-society and feudalism. Custom and later law sanctified and enforced the enslavement of women. In these societies the patriarchal family emerged as the basic production unit. In subsistence economy and petty commodity production the whole family unit organised productive labour, though in both agriculture, food processing and manufacture, women had specialised roles. The appearance of mercantile capitalism accentuated and developed this specialisation allotting to women whole areas of domestic manufacture.

Industrial Capitalism profoundly revolutionised the nature of human production and therefore the form of women's oppression. The family ceased to be the basic unit of production - being replaced by the capitalist factory and farm. The dynamic socialised production of capitalism broke up, with blind ruthlessness, the old form of the family. The skills gained in household work and in domestic manufacture, the super-exploitation and flexibility made possible by their oppression, made women an ideal major component of the workforce in emergent capitalism.

For the new proletariat, the family was restricted to the function of reproducing the workforce and reproducing labour power. Within this family, where husband, wife and

even the children from an early age were wage labourers, and where 'property' was restricted to the basic necessities for subsistence - important differences emerged with the family of the bourgeoisie, based as it was on the control of women's fertility necessary for the preservation of property rights. The proletarian household had a more 'communal' appearance. However, under this appearance of equality existed continuing factors of inequality - the insecurity and lower income of the woman proletarian, her intermittent condemnation to childbearing and child-rearing and the burden of domestic toil. Thus the proletarian household was and is partly a negation, partly an expression of the bourgeois family. That in the last analysis it is the bourgeois aspect which predominates is due materially to domestic slavery and ideologically to the fact that the ruling ideas in any epoch are the ideas of the ruling class. Under Imperialism, where a substantial upper stratum of the proletariat requires the income and security of a 'comfortable petit-bourgeoisie' - the features of the bourgeois family are greatly strengthened. This link with the bourgeoisie is *weakened* by women's presence in production, and by every reform tending towards socialising child-rearing and domestic toil, but it can never be finally severed under capitalism. However, capitalism's need to use women as part of the proletariat - as 'free labour' undermined the basis for systematic legal inequality, which had existed whilst the family was *the* productive unit. Thus during the great bourgeois revolutions which broke the economic and political fetters of capitalist production, and which proclaimed the 'Rights of Man' saw also the proclamation, at least as a democratic ideal, of the Equality of Women. The continuance of legal restrictions on women, their right to own and dispose of private property, their right to vote, hold state office, to marry, to divorce, to gain admission to education and the professions, to freely utilise all those methods available for control of their own fertility - were and are in clear contradiction to the proclaimed ideals of bourgeois democracy. The claiming of these 'equal rights' was, and is, the basis of the bourgeois women's movement. However, the bourgeoisie, once it had used democratic ideology to lead other classes in society against the feudal aristocracy and thereby achieved its own emancipation, turned to bolster its position as ruling class. It thus attempted to deny to subordinate classes, particularly the working class, the use of democratic liberties which might

assist the latter in its struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. Thus from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards the working class became the spearhead for all democratic struggles. This was no less true of the struggle for women's rights. Whilst a minority of bourgeois women, and larger numbers of women from the lower middle class organised to claim equal rights only the working class unequivocally embodied in its demands these basic democratic rights. The onset of the Imperialist phase of capitalism, with its tendency to militarism, Bonapartism, and Fascism, accentuated the role of the bourgeoisie as the enemy of women's rights. Conversely it underlined the fact that the only class whose objective interests commit it directly to the maintenance and extension of women's rights and whose class organisations possess the fighting strength to achieve this is the working class. Therefore we fight for each and every one of these basic democratic rights seeking to draw into this struggle the class organisations of the proletariat, utilising all the tactics of the class struggle and mass action.

Capitalism's Systematic Oppression

However the emancipation of women cannot be achieved simply by the granting of Equal Rights. The roots of women's oppression under capitalism do not lie, as the bourgeois feminists claim, in political inequality. There is a basic contradiction between the formal democratic equality of women and the systematic social inequality to which the nature of capitalism condemns women. The social root of this oppression lies as we have seen in the condemnation of women to domestic slavery within the family. Women are condemned to the roles of child-rearer and principal performers of the labour necessary to reproduce labour power, cleaning, washing, cooking, shopping, care of the aged and in short, housework. Capitalism excludes this work from the system of productive labour. It is unable to permanently and systematically socialise it because a) its performance can never be made into productive labour ie a source of surplus value, and therefore would have to be paid out of a tax on surplus value and b) because capitalism is a crisis-ridden system and cannot permanently retain in production all those capable of work and women make up a (concealed) part of the reserve army of labour - the unemployed - this drain on surplus value would be crippling.

Women perform these tasks, within the framework of the family, for a subsistence received from the male proletarians' wage. As capitalism provides no adequate security outside the family, this institution appears a fortress in a world whose fundamental feature is insecurity. Capitalism's inability to socialise child-rearing and domestic labour commits it to presenting this specific historic form of the relationship between human beings enshrining the oppression and exploitation of women as the Natural Order of Things. The sexuality and labour of women is presented as *naturally* at the disposal of men. From this flows the hypocritical dual standard of Morality under capitalism - women's sexuality becomes not free expression of their personality but an *object* of men's pleasure. This involves a consistent psychological and physical degradation of women and an attempt via the church, education, culture, advertising etc to convince men that their superiority is inevitable and natural and convince women that they must submit to this. This results in the sexual stereotypes and the branding of sexual and social behaviour outside of these as abnormal, unnatural etc. It is the basis of the oppression of men and women gays and of the grotesque psychological traumas associated with the contradiction between the stereotypes and the reality of human relationships - from this flows the physical violence, rape, assault etc to which women are subjected.

Women are either excluded from social life, locked away in the domestic household, or where they are involved in social labour, they are directed into areas of work closely allied to the domestic economy and its skills. Thus 'women's work' is predominantly in the fields of retail distribution, clothing, catering, care of the ill and the aged, cleaning etc. Where women work alongside men in factories and offices, they tend to be restricted to the unskilled, semi-skilled and low

paid sectors. Their education and training is designed to reinforce and prolong this 'specialisation'. Above all the family is presented as the *centre*, the first responsibility of women, to which wage work is subordinated. In the isolation of the private household, women become the victim and the agent of dominant ideology of capitalist society. This is the source of women's tendency to conservatism, to their domination by the reactionary ideology of the church and the state.

Women's Liberation and Socialism

For women to achieve full political and economic equality with men, the full socialisation of child-rearing and domestic toil and the equal involvement of women in social production is necessary. This is inseparable from the overthrow of private ownership in the means of production. Then and only then, will it be possible, on the basis of planned economy to systematically eradicate all the aspects of women's oppression, legal, economic and political. To initiate this process, the seizure of state power by the working class armed and organised into workers councils and the suppression of the resistance of the exploiters is necessary. Tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat related integrally to the expropriation of the capitalists are: the socialisation of domestic labour, the drawing of women into production and the involvement of women in political life at all levels. The revolutionary communist party, the trade unions and a mass working class women's movement must play the central role in rallying and educating women for these tasks, and in struggling against the backwardness of male workers. The liberation of women will not be finally achieved until the last vestiges, the last elements of 'superiority' or submission disappear in men and women alike - it is a task which will not be achieved 'at a single stroke' but will continue until the state and class disappear with Socialism and Communism.

But this means neither accepting oppression and exploitation in the interim, nor women waiting until the male working class liberates them by abolishing capitalism. Women, not struggling for their liberation, are not merely absent from the class struggle, they are a powerful factor fighting on the side of the bourgeoisie; at the most elementary level, in every strike, in elections etc. women unconscious of their own oppression are a force for inertia at best and for open reaction at worst. (eg the press-sponsored 'Cowley wives' the reactionary mobilisation of women in Chile etc.) Working class women are central to the struggle for the emancipation of both women and the working class - they are the most oppressed section of their sex and their class. Amongst women they have the most radical direct interest in the overthrow of the roots of their oppression in capitalism - they cannot be for long diverted into *restricting themselves* to equal rights, opportunities or utopian schemes for sexual or psychological liberation. In the working class, they have no aristocratic craft privileges, no comfortable skilled status and high wages to reconcile them to capitalism - yet this intense experience of oppression is not *enough* to locate working class women as the spearhead of the struggle. The working class is the first exploited class capable of ending all exploitation not only or not even because it is the most oppressed and exploited, but because capitalism itself organises it at the centre of socialised producing enabling it to become conscious of itself as a class, to organise against and overthrow the capitalists and reorganise production. Women form a part of the working class with precisely this potential. Though capitalism has never been able to draw *all* proletarian women into production, though it has been able to use women as a reserve army of labour, to be thrust back into the home in times of capitalist recession and crisis, women do form a vital component of the workforce and it is this section, partially released from the stultifying effects of domestic isolation who can act as the vanguard of all proletarian women. First, therefore, we turn to those sections of women workers organised in the trade unions.

Women and Capitalism in Crisis

Capitalism is a crisis-ridden system from its inception. Imperialism increases the scale and depth of these

crises from which it can emerge only at frightful cost to the working class and oppressed peoples and strata - a cost paid in terms of unemployment, dramatic cuts in living standards and carrying the threat of fascist barbarism and war. In such periods the gains made by working peoples and the oppressed are savagely clawed back at the cost of untold misery. This occurs on one condition - that the working class leading oppressed peoples and strata is unable to resolve capitalism's crisis at the expense of the bourgeoisie by seizing state power and organising the economy to meet human need. After the second Imperialist holocaust, Imperialism was able, with the collaboration of the reformist Labour, Social Democratic and Stalinist Parties, to overcome the post war crisis and stabilise the metropolitan economies for over twenty years. Now however a new period of crisis has hit the major Imperialist economies.

The effects of periods of capitalist stability and crisis on women are profound. During the Imperialist wars (in 1914-18, 1939-45,) the military mobilisation of the male labour force necessitates the temporary waiving of the restriction of women to the home - public canteens, creches, laundries are provided. Women are admitted into engineering and skilled occupations normally reserved for men. The first Imperialist war was closely followed in Europe by a crisis and therefore by attempts to reverse the 'liberalising' tendencies of the war and its aftermath. The second world war was not followed by such a crisis - indeed it saw a dramatic expansion of the economy - an expansion on a scale that required the drawing of women into the labour force on what appeared to be a permanent basis. At the same time, the expansion of the production of domestic appliances, convenience foods and the various provisions of the welfare state released many women from domestic drudgery sufficiently for them to take part-time or full-time waged work. Educational expansion and the rapid growth of the number of white collar office workers expanded the opportunities for women from the working class and lower middle class. To facilitate women's entry into industry and commerce and to avoid the inconvenience to employers that unexpected pregnancies involved, the government encouraged and tolerated the wider availability of contraception and even abortion. Ideologically this was accompanied by a 'liberalisation' of the norms of bourgeois morality to divorce, job opportunity, pay etc. None of this was granted without organised pressure - from women and from the Labour Movement. But it was granted as compatible with capitalism's long term interest within a perspective of permanent expansion and boom.

The new period of crises on a world scale presents a sharp alteration of perspectives for the ruling class. Not the extension or even maintenance of reforms but their curtailment and contraction is now official policy. Incomes policy and inflation cut real wages. Cuts in public spending hit at housing, hospitals, nurseries and schools injuring women as workers through the loss of jobs in these services means heavy and heavier burdens in the home, caring for the young, the sick and the elderly. Unemployment strikes particularly sharply at women - often unorganised or weakly organised to resist redundancies. Women are losing their jobs twice as fast as men. Even in strong unions the 'first in last out' principle works to women's disadvantage, given their child-rearing breaks in employment. The attitudes of male trade unionists - 'women out first', 'women only work for pin money' often blocks the use of the full strength of the union to fight women's unemployment. The present extremely limited and circumscribed right to abortion is under constant attack and has become the focus of 'woman as mother' agitation from that fountain of obscurantism and women's oppression, the Catholic Church. Yet the last ten years has seen such a tremendous awakening and renewal of agitation amongst women. This has taken two forms - not organically connected - the Women's Movement and the involvement of working class women in trade unions and trade union struggles. The former has affected mainly lower middle class and white collar working class women and has centred its struggles on questions related to women's oppression via her sexuality. The latter has on the other hand been limited largely to

questions of equality of pay and conditions, unionisation and resistance to unemployment. An area of partial overlap is in the field of hospital and nurseries closures.

As we have seen, women in socialised labour outside the stultifying isolation of the home, have the potentiality for vigorous struggle: the Ford Machinists, the Leeds Clothing workers, the Night cleaners, hospital workers and Trico, have over the last years shown tremendous ferocity in struggle. These workers hold the key to the building of a mass movement of working class women.

If the onslaught of the ruling class against women engendered by the deepening crisis is to be resisted. If the working class is to mobilise to defeat the overall attack and mount a counter-offensive, both the women's movement and the trade unions cannot be left as they are, they need to be radically restructured and ideologically transformed. This will not be done by abstract theorising but by fighting to win working class women active in the trade unions, and socialist women active in the women's movement to a common Action Programme which links the fight against the attacks of today to the inseparably linked goals of the emancipation of the working class and women. To this end we have drawn up the outlines of what we consider forms the basis for such an Action Programme.

The Women's Movement and Working Class Women

But a programme is nothing if it is not the rallying point for a movement - a strategy nothing without an army. It is essential to build around such a programme a Mass Working Class Women's Movement. How does such a movement relate to the Women's and Trade Union Movements of today? The women's movement of the 70s contains a whole spectrum of tendencies. Socially its strongest roots are amongst the petit-bourgeois intelligentsia. As a result both bourgeois Feminism and revolutionary communism are in a tiny minority within it.

There are two major tendencies in the Women's Movement in Britain today: Radical (or revolutionary) Feminism is explicitly anti-marxist in that it rejects the class struggle replacing it with a struggle by all women against patriarchy. Socialist-Feminism whilst it recognises the necessity for socialism to liberate women makes a number of fundamental mistakes. Firstly it accepts the integrity of the 'women's movement', i.e. of an all class alliance involving bourgeois and petit-bourgeois feminists. In fact the former are enemies and the latter unstable allies of working class women. Secondly, it is unwilling to orient centrally to working class women in general and to organised women in particular - mistaking this orientation for Economism; thirdly it insists on the political autonomy of this all-class movement, ie of its independence from the marxist class programme as embodied in a revolutionary party. Within Socialist Feminism there are therefore strong exclusionist tendencies with regard to the left groups. These tendencies are fuelled and exacerbated by the appalling record of some of these left groups, sexist attitudes, real economism etc., features which characterised groups like the SWR and IS (now SWP). The IMG (British section of the USFI) on the other hand has abandoned the Marxist position on women's liberation in the direction of espousing the 'political and organisational autonomy of the Women's Liberation Movement' is the abandonment of both the Marxist programme - justified on the excuse that the WLM is a 'social' rather than a 'political' movement - and an abandonment of proletarian women to an auxiliary role within it.

The attempt to either preserve the 'Women's Movement' as a whole as an ally of the working class or to develop socialist feminism as a 'class struggle' leadership of the Women's Movement is doomed to failure. Women are not as the IMG claim, an ally of the working class. Half the working class are women. Women are not a separate class like the peasantry, whose attachment to private property but hostility to feudal landowners makes them a potential ally, but not a part of the working class. Women - no less than men - are divided into classes and whilst working class women will support democratic rights fought for by bourgeois women

(provided they do not conflict with the immediate or strategic goals of the working class) they will not join in one movement with these 'enemy sisters'. Women from the petit-bourgeoisie or the petit-bourgeoisified intelligentsia are a different matter - these must be won to the programme of linked emancipation of the working class and of women, to orientate to and involve in working class organisation - parties and unions and to build a mass working class women's organisation. If feminism however socialist, whilst it clings to the idea of a non-class women's movement, is incapable of mobilising working class women, so is the perspective of 'women's trade unionism' or of a movement built on economic militancy alone, such as the SWP envisages. Trade unions are essential defence organisations for the working class under capitalism but divorced from politically class conscious leadership, they tend to restrict themselves to the 'more easily' organised workers and these tend to be skilled or semi-skilled *male* workers. Moreover under Imperialism a powerful and reactionary bureaucracy has established control of the unions, severely limiting and trying to extinguish democracy within their ranks. This bureaucracy has settled its social question via high salaries, permanency of office and integration to the lower levels of the capitalist state. Hostile to the overthrow of capitalism they are also hostile to the emancipation of women. All this makes the unions organisations which in their structure and in the attitudes of their officials *and their members*, mirror many of the sexist attitudes of male chauvinist bourgeois society. Mere involvement of women in trade union struggle or in the hidebound bureaucratic structures of the unions are incapable of substantially altering this situation.

If women are to join and play an active role in the trade unions to be fully involved in the struggle for their immediate demands and final emancipation, and those of the working class as a whole it is necessary to adopt a fighting strategy and specific forms of organisation to overcome the bureaucrats and transform the backward attitudes of male workers. Women in the trade unions must have the right to caucus separately at every level - not in order to split men and women workers but in order to work out their demands, plan their interventions in meetings, choose and prepare candidates for positions in the unions. This right to caucus must exist without detriment to women's full rights as trade unionists - too often women's sections or women's conferences including the Women's TUC have been used to isolate women, used as an excuse to abrogate their rights. Women's caucuses, conferences and the Women's TUC (which must be won from the bureaucrats' stranglehold, democratised by making its voting basis a lay delegates one) must have the right to present and prioritise their motions and resolutions to the appropriate TU body on which they should have an allocated representative, without prejudice to women standing for other posts.

Union meetings in worktime on full pay is a demand which is not only vital to women given their family commitments but will immeasurably strengthen union democracy and strength for male workers also. To achieve these aims unofficial caucuses must be built to fight for them. These women must work in the closest collaboration with any rank and file anti-bureaucratic opposition in the union. It is the duty of the latter to assist women to win the right to caucus, to support women workers' demands on pay, conditions etc. On the question of conditions, rank and file and women's caucuses must fight to commit the union to free creche facilities under shop steward and users control, to positive discrimination in favour of women in all apprenticeships, training schemes under trade union control.

For the Rebirth of a Mass Working Class Women's Movement

There is, in fact, a tradition of organisation of working class women independent of the bourgeois women's movement which has been obscured by the degeneration of the Social Democratic and 'Communist Parties' into reformism. Before World War One, the Social Democratic women's movement, influenced by the pioneer Marxist work of Engels and Bebel and led by figures like Clara Zetkin, stood on the left wing of Social Democracy, and played an

important role in opposing the war (whilst bourgeois feminists almost to a woman became rabid chauvinists). The same current later contributed to the founding of the Communist International and Communist Women's Movement. After the departure of the revolutionary working class women, the reformist Social Democratic women's movement, withered into a pale copy of the Liberal Women's Rights Movement.

The Russian Revolution, and the workers' state which it created, immediately granted women all the political rights so long promised, and so often withheld, by bourgeois society: freedom of divorce, abortion etc. It also systematically, within the objective limits of civil war, famine and economic devastation, set about releasing women from domestic slavery. Its gains here were necessary limited, but still placed it ahead of any capitalist state in the world. The triumph of Stalinist reaction put this process of liberation into reverse, the family was actively restored to its central function of reproducing labour power and surrounded by a, 'socialist' halo. Restrictions on abortion were re-introduced, the role of motherhood glorified and gays persecuted. The world influence of stalinism within the workers' movement helped to blight and destroy the Communist Women's Movement, founded in the early 20's, so that by the Second World War, hardly a trace of it survived.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

It is to this tradition of the German and Russian revolutionary working class women's movements that we look - not because we can slavishly copy all their positions and actions, but because they present an invaluable experience of working class women's leadership in the struggle for the emancipation of all women. It is also necessary to reassert the marxist positions developed in those movements against the capitulation of social democracy and stalinism to bourgeois positions on women. We fight today for the rebuilding of such a mass movement of working class women.

This mass working class women's movement must be rooted in the unions, in the workplace, but its fighting strategy must by no means be restricted to economic issues or to the sectional interests of 'working women' alone. Its programme must be one of struggle against all aspects of the oppression of women under capitalism - against all attacks on abortion and contraception rights, against the physical violence suffered by women, battery and rape, against all the effects on women of a capitalism in crisis, rising prices, rents, the closure of hospitals and nurseries etc. A working class women's movement would give a lead in these struggles. Such a movement would be involved to the hilt in all the mass working class organisations - Labour Party, Trade Unions etc.

Within this movement revolutionary communists should fight for their programme and for leadership against the reformists, feminists and centrists. But the movement should be organisationally independent, having its own democratically elected leadership. Revolutionary communists have nothing to fear from such democracy. To the reformists and centrists and 'Socialist Feminists' we say, 'Join us in the struggle for a working class women's movement - let us put the correctness of our politics to the test in action, in the struggles of, and alongside, working class women.' To women from today's 'Women's Movement' we say, 'You will find no tendency more intransigently dedicated to the struggle for women's freedom. We will not yield an inch to economism, to male chauvinism in the unions but, we insist, only the mass forces of working class women provide a basis for winning the final and complete liberation of women.'

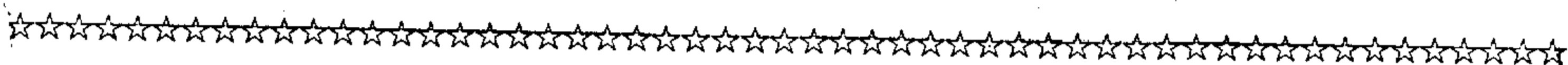
For marxists a coherent strategy for the seizure of power by the working class - a programme - is inseparable from organised militants fighting for that programme and applying it tactically - a party. The question of women's liberation is itself an integral part of that programme and women communists an integral part of the party - both in its leadership and rank and file cadre. Such a party must fight

sexism in its own ranks, amongst militant workers and in the working class at large. To do this it must take special measures to strengthen and support women within the party and the class. The right to caucus, the provision of creche facilities etc. are vital to this end. Whilst these rights must be guaranteed, we reject absolutely the view that the democratic-centralist party is inimical to the full participation of women, that women must organise separately and exclusively 'their struggle' because they alone have subjective experience of their oppression. Whilst the latter is a vital component of working out strategy and tactics, women's oppression and its relationship to class society was not discovered by subjective experience alone (any more than was working class exploitation). It was, is, and will be analysed by scientific work for which the party as a whole is the necessary vehicle.

Since correctness, both in the struggle for women's liberation and for socialism, is verifiable only in practice, the practice of organised masses, party struggle, is vital. Thus, in a mass working class women's movement parties should openly struggle, subjecting themselves of course to the norms of democracy. Those groups who, on the pretext of non-sectarianism or respect for the autonomy of the Women's Liberation Movement, disguise their members as 'individuals', arouse only suspicion and mistrust. Therefore, we state openly and clearly our positions as a group, deceiving no one.

We fight for:

A WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S MOVEMENT and for a REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST TENDENCY IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT'



An ACTION PROGRAMME for Women

FOR A WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The root of women's oppression under capitalism is her condemnation to the role of unpaid domestic labourer and childbearer within the family – a unit isolated from social production, but which performs a vital function for capitalism, that of maintaining and reproducing the present and future workforce. As capitalism provides no adequate security outside the family, this institution *appears* a fortress in an insecure world. In the isolation of the private household, women become the victim and the agent of the dominant ideology of capitalist society. This is the source of women's tendency to conservatism, by their domination by the reactionary ideology of the Church and the State. The oppression and exploitation of women is thus enshrined as the natural order of things with women's sexuality and labour presented as naturally at the disposal of men.

Capitalism uses women as a secondary element within social production. Turning her child bearing and rearing role against her, capitalism condemns the majority of women to low paid, highly insecure jobs. Women form a concealed part of the reserve army of labour – the unemployed. They are encouraged to enter production as cheap and easily manipulated labour in times of boom, of labour shortage and driven back into the home in times of crisis. Within production they are systematically super-exploited, and

largely restricted to 'women's jobs' – i.e. jobs connected in some way with the caring and servicing tasks of the household. On the basis of the privileged position of the male worker within the home and in production and on the basis of women's isolation within the home and use as cheap labour arises a division within the working class that is constantly exploited by the bosses.

Only socialism, where the productive forces are democratically planned, can organise collective responsibility for the domestic labour performed privately by women under capitalism. Only the socialisation of privatised domestic work and childrearing will release women from their centuries' old oppression and thereby *lay the basis* for them to achieve full equality with men. The utopian demand for wages for housework only serves to reinforce women's oppression in the family and hinder the struggle for women's emancipation.

Expanding capitalism in the 1950s and 1960s, anxious to exploit women's labour, was prepared (under pressure from women and the workers movement) to expand welfare and social services in order to enable women to take their place in the labour force.

That period is now over. A new period of crisis and instability has opened for world capitalism. Everywhere the employing class is devising and forcing through new measures to increase the exploitation of the working class. Capitalism, on a world scale, has dramatically increased the ranks of the unemployed, cut back on social and welfare spending, fostered divisions in the ranks of the workers movement in order to solve its crisis.

It is women workers who are being forced to bear the brunt of these attacks. Faced with shrinking markets and order books the employers are driving women out of the workforce. Women are losing their jobs twice as fast as men.

In order to direct public expenditure to more profitable

sources the employers have systematically attacked social and welfare spending. Public spending cuts not only threaten the jobs of women workers they also force onto women the burden of caring for the sick, the old, and the young.

In order to solve their crisis the employers are seeking to drive women back into the home. The glorification of the family, of motherhood, myths such as 'A Woman's Place is in the home' and 'Women only work for pin money' are the ideological tools used to help achieve this. They have the added advantage for the employers in that they serve to fragment and divide the workers movement, often setting male labour against female labour in the face of unemployment and uncertainty.

Spearheaded by the Catholic Church the ideological offensive against women's rights and equality has sharpened dramatically during the last years of capitalist stagnation and crisis. A woman's right to control her own fertility – only very partially protected by existing legislation and provided for by a woefully inadequate health service – is under attack. Such attacks can only increase unless the reactionary offensive is defeated.

Women have fought back against these attacks. The Trico strike for equal pay, the leading role played by women in struggles against hospital closures show this to be the case. They have struck, occupied, marched to defend their jobs and social service provisions. This militancy gives the lie to the claim that women are 'naturally' passive or indifferent to trade union and political struggle.

But the Trade Unions record of support for these struggles is lamentable. Here, as in the general class struggle the trade union official bureaucracy, has made its peace with capitalism.

The Trade Union leaders have refused to put the weight of the Trade Union movement behind struggles to protect women's jobs and rights. The Trade Union bureaucracy remains the entrenched enemy of the liberation of women within the labour movement.

But not only the official labour movement has failed women. Trade union branches, shop stewards committees still remain largely inaccessible to women workers. The demand for 'women out first' often raised in the face of threatened redundancy shows that the workers movement has not yet organised to prevent the employers solving their crisis by driving women back into the home.

But there is no solution for women in turning their backs on the workers movement. While women workers bear the brunt of the attack, unemployment, wage controls, declining social and welfare services are not simply women's problems. It is not only women workers who have seen their jobs and living standards cut by a treacherous Trade Union bureaucracy.

The rebirth of a broad movement of women struggling against their oppression, which dates from the late 60s was a tremendous step after decades of demoralisation and apathy. At the same time there appeared a new combativeness among working class women who started to join Trade Unions in larger and larger numbers. But the dominant ideologies within the women's movement has been Feminism and Reformist or Centrist socialism. But the strategy of feminism has been to gloss over the class differences amongst women in favour of building an 'all class' women's movement. This has resulted in the feminist movement restricting itself to utopian schemes for sexual or psychological liberation, and fighting for single issue reforms, turning its back on the struggles of working class women and the working class in general. Working class women are central to the emancipation of both women and the working class – they are the most oppressed section of their sex and their class. They alone have a radical interest in the overthrow of the roots of their oppression in capitalism.

We must build a working class based women's movement. Such a movement must base itself on those women best organised at work and in the Unions to lead a struggle, drawing in housewives to rank and file labour movement bodies, by building estate based women's committees of action around amenities, prices, rents and support for local Trade Union struggles, winning industrial support for women's battles in the factories and offices and on the estates. The

fact is that the women's movement must be able to support the struggles of the women's movement. It is not women to organise together at the workplace, on the housing estates to lay the foundation for a fighting women's movement. That women's movement must ensure 1) that the workers movement takes up and fights for women's demands; 2) that women gain the confidence to take the lead in struggles and to build unity in action with working class men; 3) that it fights alongside all those in the workers movement who are struggling to overthrow capitalist exploitation and oppression – to take the unions out of the hands of the Trade Union bureaucracy.

Such a Working Women's Movement must have a clear programme:

OPEN THE UNIONS TO WOMEN WORKERS

The Trade Unions have not ensured the full participation of women workers in their organisations. Many women see Trade Unions as the exclusive domain of the male 'breadwinners'. This idea is reinforced by male Trade Unionists hostility to women workers. This has led to some women scabbing on many strikes and men scabbing on women's struggles as at Trico. For women with domestic commitments, union meetings held outside work time with no creche facilities are impossible to attend. Therefore we must fight for:

- 1) Union meetings in work time and on full pay.
- 2) For the right of women to caucus in the unions.
- 3) For democratic women's sections in the Unions ensured of full rights to put resolutions guaranteed of full discussion in branches, districts and conferences.
- 4) Positive discrimination in favour of women as shop stewards and Union representatives.
- 5) Full Trade Union membership rights for unemployed women and housewives.
- 6) Trade Union organisation of homeworkers.
- 7) For the right of gays to caucus in the unions.
- 8) Creche facilities for pickets provided by the Union.

FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT

The employers have launched an attack on women workers. As workers who are not well organised or supported by male workers they are extremely vulnerable to redundancy. Part-time workers (the majority of them women) and 'twilight shift' workers are usually the first workers to be threatened, and often employed in creasing numbers to replace well-organised full-time workers.

The fight against redundancy is a fight to challenge the employers right to deploy labour and organise production as they choose. It necessitates the struggle to secure *workers control* of hiring and firing, of the speed and pace of work, of the length of the working day. We must fight for:

A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO WORK – for clear opposition to capitalism's attempt to solve their crisis by pushing women back into the home.

AGAINST ALL WOMEN OUT FIRST 'SOLUTIONS'
It is especially important that these two demands are campaigned for at a rank and file level where demands for women out first are often voiced.

AGAINST ALL REDUNDANCIES – CUT THE HOURS AND NOT THE JOBS

Work sharing under trade union control with no loss of earnings.

For immediate ban on all overtime, for a 35 hour week with no loss of pay to force the employers to take on more labour.

OPEN THE BOOKS – direct action to abolish business secrecy.

DIRECT ACTION TO STOP CLOSURES – occupation to seize all factories and plant in firms declaring redundancies.

Occupation to demand nationalisation under workers control of all firms announcing sackings.

FOR WORKERS SELF-DEFENSE against inevitable attack and provocation on the picket line.

AGAINST THE CUTS

As unpaid domestic workers, forced to care for the sick, the elderly and young, women are being made to pay the price for the dismantling of the NHS, the closure of nurseries and schools, the cutback in the housing programme. Those social services are already woefully inadequate. We must fight the cuts while demanding a massive expansion of welfare and social service provision under Trade Union control.

1. Direct Action to Stop the Cuts
2. No Trade Union participation in the implementation of the Cuts: no acceptance of speed-up, increased work load, no covering for unfilled vacancies.
3. For Trade Union industrial action in solidarity with all struggles against cuts.

Restore all Cuts in Social Spending: For a Programme of socially useful Public Works under Trade Union Control.

For that programme to ensure that women will be able to play an ever fuller role in social and political life as well as providing more jobs for women.

- 4) To ensure the provision of 24 hour nursery and creche facilities;
- 5) to ensure the provision of free laundry and canteen facilities;
- 6) Free abortion and contraception on demand and on the NHS. For the provision of adequate and sufficient day care centres to make this possible. Against enforced sterilisation.
- 7) Expansion of gynaecological provision and for the right of women to be treated by women if they wish.

Force Local Authorities to refuse to implement the cuts

We must campaign to force the Labour Councils to refuse to implement the cuts, to refuse to pay the crippling interest payments due to the banks and finance houses, to deliberately overspend on social and welfare provision.

Nationalise the Banks and Finance Houses: with no compensation: cancelling the crippling debts of the local authorities immediately.

FOR ALL SOCIAL SPENDING TO BE PROTECTED AGAINST INFLATION BY A SLIDING SCALE OF SOCIAL EXPENDITURE.

WAGES AND EQUAL PAY

Women earn just over half the wages of men. The 'equality' legislation introduced by the Labour Government has not altered that. It does not cover all-female work forces or jobs where fewer than six women are employed. Legislation cannot alter the fact that women are concentrated in unskilled, low paid work. The Labour Government has relied on anti-working class tribunals to defuse the militancy of the working class to fight for equal pay. This has failed – women have fought back and won equal pay through their militant actions. While supporting any amendment to the legislation to patch up the loopholes exploited by the bosses the only way equal pay can be won is by action by the working class as at Trico. We fight for:

A MINIMUM WAGE

EQUAL PAY NOW

For the Sliding Scale of Wages: Guaranteed monthly rises equivalent to the rise in the workers cost of living index – 1% for 1%. We must fight actively to draw housewives into the

calculation of all workers wage demands on the basis of a

WORKERS COST OF LIVING INDEX

WORK OR FULL PAY

100% LAY OFF PAY – workers should not bear the cost of strikes

OPPOSITION TO ALL FORMS OF INCOMES POLICY:

Opposition to all productivity deals

For full rates for part-time workers and premium rates for 'twilight' workers.

FOR THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EQUALITY OF WOMEN

Positive discrimination for women in all apprenticeships, training schemes, skills and trades under trade union control.

For the extension of protective legislation where appropriate to cover men. No dismissal during pregnancy, and no loss of benefits during pregnancy. Adequate paternity leave. A minimum of 26 weeks paid pregnancy leave. The right for either parent to take a year's paid child care leave after birth or adoption. For 12 weeks paid leave if child is still born. The right for either men or women to paid leave to care for sick dependents. Adequate child benefits non-deductible from other benefits and protected from inflation by automatic increases.

All protective legislation under TU control to ensure that it is not used as grounds for discrimination.

Equality of women in tenancies, mortgages, pension schemes, taxation, passports, care, control and custody over children including lesbian mothers, social security payments, insurances and supplementary benefits, hire purchase agreements.

Against discrimination and victimisation on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Solidarity with all Oppressed

In the struggle against their oppression women must support the battles of all oppressed and exploited against our common enemy – the capitalist class.

1) We must support in all ways possible those struggling for national independence against Imperialism; most immediately and sharply for us this must mean solidarity with those forces in Southern Africa and Ireland struggling to free themselves from the yoke of Imperialism, an active struggle to build meaningful links with and support for women engaged in those struggles.

2) FIGHT RACISM AND FACISM

The continuing crisis of capitalism has seen the employers play a racist card to divide the working class and blur the causes of the crisis. Black and Asian women are particularly oppressed both as women and as workers and as victims of racist and fascist attacks. We fight for the right of black and Asian women and ethnic minorities to caucus separately. We fight all forms of racist and fascist attack and oppose all forms of discrimination on the grounds of race. We oppose all forms of immigration controls – these particularly affect non-British women coming to Britain.

FOR A WORKERS UNITED FRONT AGAINST RACISM AND FASCISM.

NO PLATFORM FOR FASCISTS.

DRIVE THE FASCISTS AND ACTIVE RACISTS OUT OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.

AGAINST ALL IMMIGRATION CONTROLS.

THE QUESTION OF GOVERNMENT

Campaigns in particular localities, against individual employers are by themselves incapable of forcing back the attacks on working women. Reliance on the Labour Party for social reforms is inadequate as a strategy to resist the attacks.

Of necessity the massive expansion in social provision, the guarantee of women's rights demands Governmental action. Such action must mean depriving the bosses and their agents not simply of parliamentary office but of control over the economy, the bureaucracy and the army.

The Labour Government's record is a record of administering the crisis for the employers - of forcing all workers to pay the price. An integral part of the fight to transform the unions, to build a working class women's movement is to fight the betrayals of the Labour Party in and out of Government.

We must build a movement that can fight for and force the implementation of, our Action Programme. Only around such a programme can we mobilise the necessary forces to resist the attacks on women, to open the road to women's emancipation. To those millions of working class women who still have illusions in the Labour Party and whom we can draw into struggle with us we must say 'put the Labour Party to the test in struggle.' We must build a movement which can (if the reformists were right) force the Labour Party to act and still lay the basis for the working class to implement the programme itself.

Our movement must therefore demand of the Labour Government that it immediately:

1. Guarantee a Woman's Right to Work: Nationalising with no compensation all firms declaring sackings and redundancies, recognising workers control in the plant concerned.
2. Stop the Cuts: Institute a programme of public works under TU control to ensure:
 - i) Free nursery and creche facilities (24 hour);
 - ii) Free laundry and canteen facilities;
 - iii) Free abortion and contraception on demand
3. Nationalise the Banks and Finance Houses with no compensation.
4. Guarantee the Sliding scale of wages.
5. Ensure positive discrimination for women in training and education.
6. Repeal of all legislation discriminating against homosexuality and lesbian mothers and adoption rights.
7. Adequate child allowances and the extension of protective legislation.
8. End all legal restrictions on women's equality.
9. End immigration controls.
10. For the full legal protection of women against rape, assault and for the election of judiciary.

Such a Government committed to the emancipation of women is inconceivable except as a government committed to breaking the power of the capitalist class - to opening the road to a workers government - only such a government could offer an alternative to women, an alternative to domestic oppression and super-exploitation in the workplace.

workers' power 7

WORKERS' AND TRADE UNIONS

MARXISM AND THE TRADE UNIONS

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE MINORITY MOVEMENT

THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT TODAY

THE R.I.L.U. THESES

THE WORKERS POWER ACTION PROGRAMME

1978 autumn

From Social Democracy to Communism



LENIN AND LUXEMBURG AGAINST
OPPORTUNISM AND CENTRISM

In Workers Power No. 4 we examined the struggle waged by Lenin and the Bolsheviks within the shattered framework of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party between 1903 and 1912. We showed that this was a struggle against opportunism that passed through several stages beginning with the question of organisation, passing during the 1905 revolution onto the terrain of major tactical questions. On all these issues the Mensheviks appeared as systematic if vacillating revisionists of the positions worked out by Iskra between 1900 and 1903. In the terminology of the post 1914 period, they represented a *centrist* current. We showed that Lenin in no way operated with a mechanical notion of unity being obligatory until a party decisively crossed class lines in a major event such as voting war credits or forming a bloc with a bourgeois party. Instead what was central for Lenin was the preservation of the programme; organisation and major tactics of a revolutionary party. Tactically this end could be served by both a split from and a unification with unstable centrist elements depending on the tasks a given historical situation placed before the proletarian vanguard, the kind of pressure the masses exerted on these elements and the size and firmness of the revolutionary nucleus. Lenin was quite aware that the right-wing in International Social-Democracy Bernstein in Germany, Axelrod in Russia represented a *bourgeois* tendency that should be excluded from the ranks of the proletariat. In no way restricting his attacks to this right wing he was equally merciless with the vacillating, equivocating centre, in whose ranks stood Leon Trotsky. Trotsky was later to realise the profound correctness of the blows Lenin dealt him in this period and himself to fight long and hard against those who wished to pursue a similar policy. He summed this up in words which are very relevant today 'A simple conciliation of factions is possible only along some sort of 'middle' line. But where is the guarantee that this artificially drawn diagonal line will coincide with the needs of objective development? The task of scientific politics is to deduce a programme and a tactic from an analysis of the struggle of classes, not from the parallelogram of such secondary and transitory forces as political factions'. (Stalin, L. Trotsky Vol 1, p.172).

by
DAVE HUGHES

Events have shown the practical fruit born from the IMG's revision of Bolshevik history. The IMG theoreticians excised Lenin's struggle against conciliations and centrism, consigned tactics to a realm unconnected to programme in order to clear the decks for Socialist Unity and Socialist Challenge. As one of the largest groups on the Left they are seriously and systematically miseducating and misleading a whole stratum of subjectively revolutionary militants. First they falsified history. Now they are liquidating the conception of a disciplined democratic centralist party and the historic programme of Trotskyism.

In the second article in our series 'Party and Programme' — 'From Communism to Social-Democracy' we looked at Marx and Engels struggle for a scientific programme in the first mass workers party. Here also we discovered that the question of unity was predicated in achieving a programme which outlined an operative strategy. Here also it was obvious that degeneration set in when tactics were sundered from principles — the former becoming increasingly opportunist, following the line of least resistance; the latter becoming an ossified shibboleth. We showed that the 'great events', the decisive crossing of the class line of 1914 had its roots in the early days of Social-Democracy. That Marx and Engels fought unsparingly to eradicate them — a fight that included, in 1875, a fight *against unity* on a rotten programme.

In this third article of the series we look at the formation of a revolutionary current within German Social-Democracy — the Left-Radicals, consisting of Rosa Luxemburg, Klara Zetkin, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring and other figures such as Karl Radek and Anton Pannekoek. The contribution these figures made to the re-elaboration of the revolutionary programme has been obscured by a welter of lies and misrepresentation emanating from their 'friends', centrist and ultra-left anti-bolsheviks as well as the professional hacks of Stalinism who abuse in these figures all those revolutionary qualities that they seek to obscure in Lenin. However any re-assessment of the Left Radicals cannot be conducted in a spirit of uncritical piety. The War and the subsequent revolutionary upheavals of 1918/19 found the German proletariat with only the feeblest nucleus of a revolutionary party. This was of no small significance on a world scale, since Germany was to be the key to the prospects for the international spread of the Russian revolution up to 1933. It is in this context that we examine the key questions of the nature of the epoch and the strategy and tactics necessary for it, and of how to build a party capable of winning the working class to this programme for the seizure of power. From this we shall see that the question of splits and unification must be related to this goal as a tactic, not as some sort of absolute imperative, breakable only in the case of a higher absolute 'not crossing class lines'.

Lastly we return to the Bolsheviks again, or rather to the conjunction of the Bolsheviks with the Left Radicals and other proto-communist groups during the First World War. Here again we shall see not a jumbling together of all those who had not crossed class lines but a merciless struggle against centrist positions, centrist slogans and the eventual winning of the best, subjectively revolutionary elements away from these positions to a consistent, communist, programme and tactic.

THE FORMATION OF THE LEFT-WING IN THE S.P.D.

We have examined the rupturing of the revolutionary communist tradition within the largest and most influential of the mass Social Democratic Parties. The fact that this was masked by regular declarations of Marxist orthodoxy does not alter the nature of the process of degeneration into reformism and opportunism. However the very orthodoxy of German Social Democracy, the immense political authority of its chief ideologue, Karl Kautsky served to blind many revolutionary Marxists to the scale of degeneration in German Social Democracy in the first decade of the twentieth century.

If we are to understand the struggle to revive the revolutionary programme against the reformists and opportunists, we have to examine the development of the Left wing in German Social Democracy, and of Bolshevism in Russia. Both of these tendencies had their origin in national organisational and tactical differences with their respective reformists and opportunists. The full programmatic implications of the differences, of the splits, were developed on the basis of experience of mass struggle in the period before the Imperialist war, and on a serious political economy of Capitalism in its Imperialist phase. A study of the widening gulf between sterile Kautskyian orthodoxy and the Left in the Second International is vital for all those who want to understand the relationship between tactical differences and 'general principles', who want to understand the method of re-elaborating and redefining the revolutionary programme.

Lenin's split with the Russian opportunists in 1903, the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, was understood by him to be over organisational matters. The mass struggles in Russia from 1905 to 1907, the response of the two factions within the split party to those struggles, made it abundantly clear that the Bolsheviks did not simply represent a different method of 'organising' the party. (1) From 1905 onwards, Lenin understood the Bolsheviks to be the defenders of the revolutionary programme against the conciliationism and legalism of the Mensheviks. He did not, however, generalise from the Russian struggle to the state of the International until a later period. On an international scale the front line troops in the battle against Kautsky's orthodoxy were the German Left, organised around Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Although wrong on many issues, it was Rosa Luxemburg who opened up the conflict between revolutionaries in Social Democracy and the Kautskyite leadership. She did this at a time when Lenin was still uncritically invoking the political authority of Kautsky and Bebel against the Russian opportunists. This legacy of Rosa Luxemburg is one openly acknowledged by Lenin after the collapse of German Social Democracy in 1914. Writing to Schliapnikov on October 27 1914, Lenin had this to say, *'I hate and despise Kautsky now more than all the rest, the filthy, vile and self-satisfied brood of hypocrisy ... Rosa Luxemburg was right, she long ago understood that Kautsky had the highly developed, 'servility of a theoretician', to put it more plainly, he was ever a flunky to the majority of the party, a flunky to opportunism.'* (2)

Against Bernstein's revision of Marxism, Kautsky re-affirmed the crisis ridden nature of the capitalist system, the necessity to ever force up the rate of exploitation of surplus value from the working class. However, for Kautsky these remained in operative items in an orthodox catechism. The period of the late 1890's and early 1900's was still seen by Kautsky as a non-revolutionary period. The tactics of Social Democracy — peaceful building of the trade union organisations and the strengthening of the Social Democratic parliamentary position, were not challenged. While Luxemburg and the Left defended the tenets of Marxist political economy alongside Kautsky, their differences with the Party as a whole, with the revisionists and the orthodox, crystallised around the question of tactics. Luxemburg's first critique of Bernstein, articles gathered together into Reform or Revolution, not only defends Marxist political economy, *'Bernstein began his revision of Social Democracy by abandoning the theory of capitalist collapse. The latter, however, is the cornerstone of scientific socialism'*, but implicitly comes out against the pacifist tactics embraced by the majority of the party. It is this document that contains her critique of pure trade unionism, of building up trade union power as a programme for socialism, *'...the objective conditions of capitalist society transform the two economic functions of the trade unions into a sort of labour of Sisyphus, which is, nevertheless, indispensable.'* She challenged the reformist idea that the development of political democracy makes the proletarian revolution either impossible or superfluous. She does so in order to reorientate the programme and practice of the party. For the first time, Luxemburg openly calls for a programme that outlines the road to power for the proletariat. *'Our programme would*

be a miserable scrap of paper if it could not serve us in all eventualities, at all moments of the struggle, and if it did not serve us by its application, not by its non-application. If our programme contains the formula of the historic development of society from capitalism to socialism, it must formulate, in all its characteristic fundamentals, all the transitory phases of this development, and it should, consequently, be able to indicate to the proletariat what ought to be its corresponding action at every moment on the road to socialism. There can be no time for the proletariat when it will be obliged to abandon its programme or be abandoned by it.' (4)

This challenged not only Bernstein's revisionism but also the Erfurt synthesis of reformist tactics with formal acknowledgement of the ultimate objective of socialism. For Luxemburg and the German Left the only effective rebuff to opportunism lay in the development of new tactics that placed working class power on the agenda. Luxemburg expressed this in a letter to Roland Holst of the 17th December, 1904. *'The only means to combat opportunism radically is to move forward ourselves, to develop the tactic, to intensify the revolutionary aspect of the movement.'* The developing tactical differences, central to the process of re-elaborating the revolutionary programme, were concretised in the mass struggles of the European working class from 1902 to 1906. The Belgian General Strike of 1902, the Dutch General Strike of 1903, a massive strike wave in Russia culminating in the revolution of 1905, miners' strikes in the Ruhr, opened up the debate on tactics in the German Social Democracy. The 'orthodox' saw the mass strike as a valuable addition to their armoury, but they saw it as a subordinate to, a back up for, the parliamentary reformist tactic. This position was clearly formulated by Bebel, for example, at the SPD's Jena Congress in 1905. He argued that the mass strike weapon was necessarily a defensive and subsidiary tactic. It should be resorted to, Bebel argued, when the two principle prerequisites for implementing the tactics of the party, universal suffrage and the right to organise in trade unions, came under attack. The massive energy and strength exhibited in the mass strike wave was seen only as an appendage, a reserve, off-stage, army to the central task of increasing trade union strength and parliamentary representation.

Luxemburg and the Left's reply, her codification of the experience of the mass strike wave, is found in her pamphlet, *'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions'*, written in 1906. At a time when the Bolsheviks were learning from the mass struggles in Russia and developing a sharpened perspective for the coming revolution accordingly, the German Left saw in the mass struggles the basis of alternative tactics to those of the revisionist and orthodox in Social Democracy. Polemicising against the German trade union bureaucracy that vetoed a discussion of the general strike at the 1905 conference and the shortsightedness of the Jena Congress resolution's attempt to, *'seek to narrow and to artificially smother the social importance, and to limit the historical scope of the mass strike as a phenomenon, as a problem of the class struggle...'* (6) Luxemburg called on German Social Democracy and the German working class to learn from the experience of the Russian revolution, *'The most backward country of all, just because it has been unpardonably late with its bourgeois revolution, shows ways and methods of further class struggle to the proletariat of Germany and the most advanced capitalist countries.'* (7) Not only does the Russian revolution signal, *'a new lengthy period of violent struggles'* but the ripeness of the international labour movement for decisive revolutionary struggle, *'and while the bureaucrats of the German labour movement rummage in their office drawers for information as to their strength and maturity, they do not see that that which they seek is lying before their eyes in a great historical revolution, because, historically considered, the Russian revolution is a reflex of the power and maturity of the International and, therefore, in the first place of the German labour movement.'* (8)

What is vital to Luxemburg's pamphlet is not simply the discovery of a new tactic. For Luxemburg the revolution in Russia signified the end of the parliamentary period, a period where the economic and political struggles of the working

class were necessarily but artificially separated. The conservative bureaucracy in the trade unions, the short-sighted Party officials, owed their authority, and hence their deep hostility to mass action, to this separation. To Luxemburg, the mass strike breaks down the artificial walls between economic and political struggle, *'the economic struggle is the transmitter from one political centre to another; the political struggle is the periodic fertilisation of the soil for economic struggle.'* 9 The mass strike opens up immediately the question of which class rules in society, hence the impossibility of limiting its use to the defence of the parliamentary or trade union tactic. Hence also its centrality in any programme for the seizure of power by the working class.

Luxemburg's pamphlet has its notable weaknesses, it fails to emphasise the central role of the party in leading and directing the general strike and the struggle for power. Nonetheless, in locating and polemicising against the innate conservatism of the labour bureaucracy, in arguing for orientation to a new period of revolutionary struggles and for tactics relevant to those struggles that would be capable of leading the mass of workers in action, it marks a significant break with the perspectives and programme of German Social Democracy.

The Left saw the mass strike as a necessary and integral part of the proletarian revolution. As such it was central to the working class' own preparation for power. The orthodox responded to the strike wave by trying to co-opt its massive energy into their own reformist schema as a useful but subsidiary tactic. In the *'Road to Power'* (1909) Kautsky argued that the mass strike was one, but only one, form that the revolutionary struggle could take. While recognising its role, particularly in Russia, he saw no need for German Social Democracy to alter its programme and tactics. He said this while recognising on the level of 'general principle' that the intensification of the class struggle signalled the opening of a new and revolutionary period, *'The only certain thing is universal uncertainty. It is certain that we are entering upon a period of universal unrest, of shifting of power, and that whatever form this may take, or how long it may continue, a condition of permanent stability will not be reached until the proletariat shall have gained the power to expropriate politically and economically the capitalist class and thereby inaugurate a new era in the world's history.'* (10)

In the *'Road to Power'* Kautsky attempted to undermine both the left's call for revolutionary tactics and the revisionists programme for class collaboration and class peace. His 'centrist' recipe was a peculiar combination of optimism *'Happy he who is called to share in this sublime battle and this glorious victory'* (11) - and passive subservience to the inexorable logic of socialist victory. Kautsky at this time was prepared to recognise the tendency of capitalism towards militarism and war, it is a central premise in the *'Road to Power'*. He was prepared to morally indict capitalism for this while unprepared to alter and focus the Party's strategy accordingly.

Tactical differences within the German Social Democratic Party did not rest exclusively on the question of the mass strike. In 1905 and 1906 the Left, particularly Karl Liebknecht, urged the party to undertake a vigorous anti-militarist campaign. They proposed anti-militarist and anti-enlistment Party agitation among youth and soldiers. While the party leadership still stood by the 'principles' of refusing to vote for any capitalist budget, refusing to bloc or take office with any bourgeois party, they violently resisted the proposal for anti-militarist agitation. Such work, they consistently argued, was illegal and would force the Party into confrontation with the State Courts. As such it challenged the accepted tactics of the Social Democracy - the legal strengthening of the Party and Trade Union organisation and base.

But the differences between the orthodoxy of Kautsky and Bebel and the future founders of the German Communist Party had an implicit content that went far beyond simple disagreement as to the role and applicability of particular tactics. In the aftermath of the 1905 revolution the differences hinged increasingly on the nature of the period ahead and the consequent tactics and strategy to be employed by Social-Democracy. These differences came to a head in the debate on Imperialism.

The tactical differences within the German Party lie at the heart of the debate on Political Economy. By this we do not mean that a tactical debate was conducted in the language of economics. Only by a thorough examination of the particular period of capitalist development only by re-asserting the method of Marxist political economy could the revolutionary communists within Social Democracy enter on the path of re-elaborating a programme for working class revolution.

THE DEBATE ON IMPERIALISM

The concept of 'Imperialism' was crucial to the development of the Left's programme and their critique of the orthodox centre. Written in 1913 Luxemburg's 'The Accumulation of Capital' attempts a systematic explanation of Imperialism and deduces a perspective of Capitalist crisis from it. Luxemburg starts from the premise that Capital can only expand by continuously subordinating non-capitalist elements within the capitalist country and in parts of the globe where capitalist relations were not yet established. Capital Accumulation in the nineteenth century depended on wealth accrued from outside the capitalist system itself. 'Thus the immediate and vital conditions for capital and its accumulation is the existence of non-capitalist buyers of the surplus value which is decisive to this extent for the problem of capital accumulation.

Whatever the theoretical aspects, the accumulation of capital, as an historical process, depends in every respect upon non-capitalist social strata and forms of social organisation'. (12) The massive expansion of capital in the nineteenth century was possible because of the size and scale of non-capitalist relations in the world. Those resources, Luxemburg argued in 1913, were becoming ever scarcer the subject of increasingly sharp competition between the rival national capitals for their own survival.

Imperialism and consequent militarism were to be understood only in this context. 'Militarism... is a pre-eminent means for the realization of surplus value, it is itself a province of accumulation' (13) Militarism was an inevitable consequence of the last desperate struggles of Imperialism, 'Imperialism is the political expression of the accumulation of capital in its competitive struggle for what remains still open of the non-capitalist environment. (14)

Now Luxemburg was wrong in her theory of Capital Accumulation in her insistence that there could be no extended reproduction of Capital without non-capitalist consumption of the surplus value. Pannekoek of the German Left, Bukharin

of the Russian Party argued this forcefully in polemics with her. Bukharin's *Imperialism and the World Economy* published in 1915, Lenin's 'Imperialism - the highest Stage of Capitalism' (1916) start from the concept of a fusion, 'a condescence' of finance and industrial capital of Imperialism as the export of capital. Militarism for them is an integral part of this process 'The internationalisation of economic life, here too makes it necessary to settle questions by fire and sword' (15) but basing themselves of Hilferding's 'Finance Capital' published in 1910 Bukharin and Lenin develop a scientific and concrete understanding of the specific nature of imperialism.

The question then is not whether Luxemburg's position on Imperialism was correct. We would argue that Bukharin and Lenin were right against her. Lenin in 1913 considered Luxemburg's book to be dangerous enough to applaud critics of it from all parts of the political spectrum within German Social Democracy, writing to Kamenev he said 'I have read Rosa's book *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals*. She is an impudent liar, who has mutilated Marx. I am delighted that Pannekoek, Eckstein and Bauer have unanimously accused her of the same things of which I accused the Populists in 1899.' 16

But Luxemburg's work is the first major attempt of the Social Democratic left to come to terms with the new period of capitalism, to attempt to develop a theory of the new period to lay the basis for a programme for Socialist revolution.

THE BREAK WITH KAUTSKY AND THE 'MARXIST CENTRE'

The theory of Imperialism as the last, most contradictory, crisis torn and destructive stage of capital was to become the basic plank of the communist left. The implications for the left were stark. Such a period posed immediately the choice of 'Socialism or barbarism' to the working class movement, it cut the ground from beneath the majority of Social Democracy who still looked to peacefully utilising those existing democratic institutions of capitalism to build the movement. The logic of imperialism and militarism would force capitalism to undermine any authority rising in Parliaments, made impossible a perspective of gradual and democratic development. Radek described this as Imperialism 'hollowing out parliamentarism as a weapon of the working class'. The ever greater dependence of the competing capitalist economies on militarism rendered historically redundant, rendered utopian, pacifist disarmament and diplomatic peace campaigns. As Luxemburg wrote in 1911 'The Question of Militarism and Imperialism form the central axis of political life 1911 *The question of Militarism and Imperialism form the central axis of political life; in them and not in questions of ministerial responsibility and other pure parliamentary demands, lies the key to the political situation*' (17) Mass action by the proletariat, not parliamentary manoeuvre and strength held the key to the working class reply to capitalism's crisis. It was the Left in International Social Democracy - including both Lenin and

Luxemburg who fought and nominally committed the second International to an international general strike in the event of declared hostilities between the European ruling classes.

Kautsky's reply to the Left's theory of Imperialism - published after the start of the War! - was delivered most systematically in *Der Imperialismus* *Die Neue Zeit* Sept 11 1914 (18). Faced with the political, programmatic logic of the theory of Imperialism Kautsky pulls back from the positions he had espoused in the 'Road to Power'. Imperialism he argues is but one policy adopted by capitalism to overcome the economic problem of agricultural production lagging behind industrial production. As such capitalism would be offered an opportunity to change course after the war... *'There is no economic necessity for continuing the arms race after the World War, even from the standpoint of the capitalist class itself, with the exception of at most certain armaments interests'* (19). Imperialism as a policy will be, Kautsky argues, a positive hindrance to capitalist growth... *'Imperialism is thus digging its own grave. From a means to develop capitalism it is becoming a hindrance to it. Nevertheless, capitalism need not yet be at the end of the line, from the purely economic standpoint, it can continue to develop so long as the growing industries of the capitalist countries can induce a corresponding expansion of agricultural production'* (20). There is a political alternative to imperialism and militarism, an alternative which the growth of cartels and monopolies in the economic sphere will stimulate capitalism to adopt. This alternative is the envisaged stage of self-interested world capitalist cooperation: Ultra-Imperialism *'the translation of cartellization into foreign policy; a phase of ultra-imperialism which of course we must struggle against as energetically, as we do against imperialism, but whose perils lie in another direction, not in that of the arms race and the threat to world peace'* (sic).

And what policies, what programme flows from this new theory? Clearly it offers only a pacifist opposition to the first imperialist war. The war itself will educate the capitalists into new ways... *'the longer the war lasts, the more it exhausts all the participants and makes them recoil from an early repetition of armed conflict, the nearer we come to this last solution, however unlikely it may seem at the moment'* (21). The proletarian revolution is not on the agenda, capitalism is capable of adopting policies to ensure a period of global stability and security. The tasks for socialists rest in persuading capitalist society to take that path, to see its potential interest and then Social-Democracy can return to the tactics adopted and operating before the imperialist war, tactics temporarily suspended because of that war.

Under the hammer blows of the outbreak of war, against the programmatic thrust of the revolutionary Lefts Kautsky's 'theoretical' degeneration is complete. We do not say so simply because of the events of the 1920s and 1930s proved Kautsky so wrong but because his 'theory' offered to the working class only submission disarmament and international cooperation afterwards!

The German Left, fighting nose to nose with Kautskyism orthodoxy, by their fight for revolutionary tactics, by their attempts to establish a pol-

itical economy of Imperialism rekindled important and fundamental elements of the communist tradition. Their position, however, remained incomplete and inadequate by the time of sharpest test for Social Democracy. On August 4th 1914 German Social Democracy voted war credits to the Imperial regime. Luxemburg was stunned. Lenin in Switzerland, refused to believe the newspaper reports believing them to be forgeries produced by German High Command. Luxemburg could declare *'since August 4th, 1914, German Social Democracy has been a stinking corpse'* but the grouping around her, as we shall see were not capable of establishing a clear and programmatic basis for a new and revolutionary Communist International Party. It was Lenin and his co-thinkers within the Bolshevik Party who had played a less significant role in the fight against opportunism internationally than the German revolutionaries who was to understand the key questions of principle and strategy that were to lay the basis for a programmatic split with opportunism.

The problems facing communists were essentially those of *explanation* of the opportunist politics of the Social Democratic Parties, of developing the programmatic basis for the struggle for power in the imperialist epoch, the programmatic basis for the split with all opportunist elements.

LENIN, IMPERIALISM AND THE ROOTS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC DEGENERATION

Luxemburg and the German Left had characterised and criticised the opportunism of the SPD leadership. Their theories of imperialism, their polemics and their tactical proposals however contained no explanation of the opportunist trend in the Labour movements. Lenin's work on Imperialism sought not only to understand the economic mechanisms of capitalism at its highest stage of development, it sought to locate the opportunism of the Labour movement in that stage. The split in Social-Democracy he concluded, was inevitable and based in the material conditions of Imperialist society. Lenin in 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism' argues that the Bolsheviks have always seen *'the economic connection between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the opportunism which has triumphed (for long?) in the labour movement and from this incidentally, we concluded that a split with the social-chauvinists was inevitable'* (22) The two trends so obviously evident in the 1914 split had been ever present in the labour movements of the Imperialist States - *'these two trends, one might even say two parties, in the present day labour movement, which in 1914-1916-1916 so obviously parted ways all over the world were traced by Engels and Marx in England throughout the course of decades, roughly from 1858 to 1892'* (23). The split was not a matter of one trend crossing the lines to the enemy in August 1914 - although this is how the IMG try to portray it - but based on the fact that the Second International Parties contained not only revolutionary Marxists but, on the whole, a predominance of the culture and politics of the labour aristocracy

weaned by Imperialism. 'Now a 'bourgeois labour party is inevitable and typical in all imperialist countries; but in view of the desperate struggle they are waging for the division of the spoils, it is improbable that such a party can prevail for long in a number of countries' (24)

Imperialism nurtured bourgeois labour parties based on the labour aristocracy, but the Imperialist War cuts away 'in a number of countries' the base for the labour opportunists and for those in Social Democracy who have refused to break with them. Here Lenin's venom is directed at Kautsky, a figure that Lenin had viewed sympathetically long after Luxemburg had opened her attack on his hollow orthodoxy... 'Kautskyism is not an independent trend because it has no roots either in the masses or in the privileged stratum which has deserted to the bourgeoisie' (25)

Lenin had been aware of the existence of 'two tendencies' in the International and in the German Labour movement in particular, in advance of the August 1914 betrayal. Writing in *Prosvescheniye* in April 1914 he addressed an article to the Russian comrades 'What should not be copied from the German movement'.

"We must not try to play down the disease which the German party is undoubtedly suffering from. . . nor must we play it down with 'officially optimistic' phrases. We must lay it bare to the Russian workers, so that we may learn from the experience of the older movement, learn what should not be copied from it." (26)

The article is primarily aimed at the leading Social Democratic Trade Union bureaucrat Karl Liegen, but Lenin makes it plain that the 'official optimism' pervading the upper reaches of the party is blinding it to its own disease. This 'official optimism' was a German version of the conciliationism found within the Russian movement.

It is sometimes stated that Lenin had boundless illusions in the revolutionary nature of the German party. This is simply untrue. The depth of Lenin's concern over opportunism within the SPD is indicated in a letter to Inessa Armand he wrote shortly before the publication of the article against Liegen:

"The Germans virtually have two parties, and this has to be born in mind without trying to shield the opportunists (the way Neue Zeit and Kautsky are now doing.)" (27)

Lenin's conclusion is that he and Zinoviev are determined to "hound them with all our might". Lenin was thus already identifying the trends he had fought and split with in Russia inside the German movement. Conversely he strove to counter the attempts being made by the conciliators to use the prestige of the German party to preach unity and tolerance of opportunism. Lenin was obdurate that *"the more often the liberals and the liquidators in Russia (including Trotsky of course) attempt to transplant this amiable characteristic to our soil, the more determinedly they must be resisted."* (28)

The 'official optimists' - the Centre - subordinated the fight against the reformists to the maintenance of unity. Under the banner of 'unity' the majority of Social Democracy refrained from breaking with Bernstein. Under the same slogan the Russian 'centre' campaigned against the open break in Russian Social Democracy. Against this international and national tendency Lenin waged a war for unity of marxists alone - BEFORE THE AUGUST 1914 BETRAYAL. Writing in *Put Pravdy* in April 1914 'On Unity' he declared *"Unity is a great thing and a great slogan. But what the workers cause needs is the unity of marxists, not unity between marxists, and opponents and distorters of marxism."* (29)

Generalising from the national struggle against opportunism in Russia, understanding the roots of the split in socialism as a result of his work on Imperialism Lenin was more sharp and clear than Luxemburg and the German Left in the first years of the war.

THE WAR, THE GERMAN LEFT-RADICALS AND CENTRISM

The differences between Luxemburg and Lenin during the war had their roots in the differences between their struggle against opportunism in the years preceding it. Luxemburg and the Left-Radicals situation was in some respects more difficult than that of Lenin. They existed in a mass party that had not *formally* renounced its revolutionary heritage. The party leadership had formally rejected Bernsteinism, had held to the Erfurt Programme. But in substance, in practice they had conducted an opportunist tactic for over a decade. The Left Radicals had spearheaded the attack on the Right in alliance with the centre. Influenced by this alliance, they had not pressed for the *expulsion* of the Right from the party. Had they done so this would have revealed firstly the scope of opportunism within the party and secondly the compromised purely verbal radicalism of the Centre. The tactical struggle over the mass strike from 1905 to 1910 had partially revealed this. Anton Pannekoek writing in *Neue Zeit* in 1912 characterised 'Kautskyan radicalism' as viewing the revolution as 'an event in the future, a political apocalypse' which had little impact on contemporary practice other than justifying a continued 'marshalling of the troops' by trade union and parliamentary head counting. He noted that this split between a radical goal and a revisionist practice would lead Kautsky to a rapprochement with Bernstein *against* the Lefts. *"- it is apparent that the revisionists rejection of any revolutionary action and Kautsky's postponement of it to the indefinite future are bound to unite them on many of the current issues on which they both oppose us."* (30)

It was the strength of figures like Luxemburg and Pannekoek that they vigorously tested the lofty principles of the SPD in the balance of *tactics*, and found the Party and its ideologues woefully inadequate. But they themselves had an accompanying weakness that proved very serious in the long run. Appalled by the bureaucratic inertia of the party machine, developing against it a withering critique of its deadening effects on the masses they came to underestimate the necessity to pose against this a different form of organisation. Rosa never put forward, as the stupid slanderers of Stalinism or the false friends of 'libertarian socialism' claim a theory which denied the role of the party or relied on the 'spontaneity' of the masses. Unlike Lenin however, she had little experience of developing the type of party which could carry out the tactics she was forced to advocate as an oppositionist within a mass party. Therefore, in Trotsky's words, *"... in her historical - philosophical evaluation of the labour movement, the preparatory selection of the vanguard, in comparison with the mass actions that were to be expected, fell too short with Rosa; whereas Lenin - without consoling himself with the miracles of future actions - took the advanced workers and constantly and tirelessly welded them together into firm nuclei, illegally or legally, in mass organisations or underground by means of a sharply defined programme."* (31) In Germany Rosa had no clear field for these tasks. The ground was encumbered by the mass, legalist, bureaucratized party and trade unions. The only way to have selected a firm cadre and welded them together would have been a sharp factional struggle around a definite alternative strategy - a new programme in embryo.

Lenin was later to sense this lack in the pre 1914 German Lefts. In his review of the Junius brochure he notes: *"Junius's pamphlet conjures up in our mind the picture of a lone man who has no comrades in an illegal organisation accustomed to thinking out revolutionary slogans to their conclusion and systematically educating the masses in their spirit. But this shortcoming - it would be a grave error to forget this is not Junius's personal failing, but the result of the weakness of all the German Leftists, who have become entangled in the vile net of Kautskyite hypocrisy, pedantry, and 'friendliness' for the opportunists."* (32)

THE QUESTION OF THE SPLIT

In a newly translated article on Rosa Luxemburg (33) Ernest Mandel argues correctly that Rosa Luxemburg should have built an organised left faction within German Social Democracy. He does this however with the condition that a split, a new party, could not have taken place before the historic betrayal of August 1914 - "the formation of a new party was of course impossible until the treachery of the SPD leadership had been irremediably demonstrated to the masses by manifest betrayals of an historic scope." (34) By this he means that until the SPD leaders openly supported their own ruling class's Imperialist war, "crossed class lines", there was no grounds for a split in Social Democracy, only grounds for organising a tendency.

Mandel ignores the fact that a vigorous organised factional struggle within the SPD, would have brought a decisive clash with the party bureaucracy. If the Lefts had refused to compromise it would most certainly have led to a split, to expulsions and the necessary formation of a new party. Mandel's view that this would have been 'impossible' would be a recipe for capitulation. Lenin was in retrospect to see that the pre-war splits with opportunism in Russia, in Bulgaria, in Italy, and Holland strengthened the proletarian vanguard and rescued important sections of workers from the debacle of 1914. Thus in 1914 he could write:

"In Italy the party was the exception for the period of the Second International; the opportunists, headed by Bissolati, were expelled from the party. In the present crisis, the results have proved excellent: people of various trends of opinion have not deceived the workers or blinded them with pearls of eloquence regarding "unity"."

He draws the conclusion

"What was a happy exception for the Second International should and shall become the rule for the Third International." (35)

After the great betrayal of August 1914 the political terrain was not as simple as portrayed by the IMG and USFI theoreticians. The camp of outright Social-Chauvinism was fairly obvious. In Germany it consisted of SPD leaders like Ebert, Cunow, David, Scheideman, Sudekum, Noske and TU leaders like Karl Liegen. Architects of the "civil peace", they made recruiting speeches, toured the front, sat on the munitions committees. The party and trade union journals carried nauseating chauvinist articles. In Britain they consisted of figures like Arthur Henderson, Sidney Webb and the ex-marxist Hyndman. In the Russian party Plekhanov became an outright chauvinist. In France the veteran marxist Jules Guesde and Marcel Sembat entered the war cabinet and the syndicalist Leon Jouhaux took the office of National Commissar. In Belgium Emile Vandervelde joined the government of national defence.

Amongst opponents of the war there was little clarity. The most determined and immediate opposition came from the Social-Democratic deputies in the Serbian parliament. On 31st July, faced with the war credits vote Lapcevic and Katzlerowitch voted against them. On the 8th August in the Russian Duma Bolshevik and Menshevik deputies read a joint declaration against the war and left the chamber before the vote was taken.

In Germany whilst Karl Liebknecht and fourteen other SPD deputies had voted within the party fraction against voting war credits, when it came to the vote in the Reichstag they all obeyed party discipline. On that very evening a small group met in Rosa Luxemburg's flat to plan resistance to the war. It was a slow and difficult task. No disciplined faction existed within German Social Democracy - only a broad left-radical current. The wave of chauvinism carried away many erstwhile supporters. It took many months to assemble even a nucleus. Liebknecht, rallying to the group was able to use his Reichstag deputyship to good effect when in December he broke discipline and voted against the

second war credits bill. It was Spring 1915 before the group was able to bring out a single issue of a legal magazine 'Die Internationale'. Whilst its articles ferociously attacked the 'civil peace', recognised the breakdown of the International, bitterly attacked Kautsky's sophisms and advocated Liebknecht's slogan 'the main enemy is at home' it still posed the key goal as 'peace', although stressing that this could be achieved 'not by pious wishes, cleverly concocted solutions and Utopian demands addressed to the ruling classes' but by relentless class struggle against the perpetrators of the war. Another grouping emerged around the journal Lichtstrahlen calling themselves the 'German International Socialists'. Severe repression - the arrest and imprisonment of first Luxemburg and then Liebknecht rendered the task of developing a coherent programme more difficult than that facing the emigre Bolshevik leadership who furthermore had an already prepared illegal apparatus at their command.

Liebknecht although conscripted was released to attend the rare sittings of the Reichstag. From its tribune he poured out a ceaseless stream of denunciations of the war. He also managed to issue a series of leaflets driving home his slogan 'the worst enemy is at home'. In prison Luxemburg wrote the 'Crisis in Social Democracy', the famous *Juniusbrochure* but it was not possible to publish it until April 1916, after Rosa had been released from prison. Indeed 1916 was a crucial turning point for the opposition to the war.

At first totally stunned by the eruption of the war, totally demoralised by the momentary chauvinist hysteria whipped up amongst the masses - the old 'Marxist Centre' of the Party - Hugo Haase, Georg Ledebour, Rudolf Hilferding and Kautsky had either remained silent or manufactured excuses for the treason of August. By 1915 the pressure of the Internationalists and the re-awakening class consciousness of the workers of Berlin, Leipzig, Bremen, Essen and most of the main industrial centres forced them to move into opposing the war on pacifist slogans. From the right, the unbridled chauvinists drove them from the party apparatus. Kautsky in a letter to Victor Adler wrote

"... those around David and the trade unionists believe the moment is ripe to purge the party of all traces of Marxism... They are going about this with a ruthless terrorism which is hard to tolerate... The dispute is growing more embittered every day, and one day we may be faced with an ultimatum which makes open war inevitable."

The split was indeed precipitated by the right in March 1916. The SPD Parliamentary Fraction expelled thirty three of its members. By the end of the year despite gaining two fifths of the votes at the SPD Congress the expulsions were mounting and in April 1917 at a conference, held ironically in Gotha the Independent Social-Democratic Party (USPD) was founded.

Within this classically centrist party there existed three trends. A right wing led by Kautsky and Bernstein - who had opposed the split and saw it as a temporary phenomenon, and were opposed to participation in efforts to re-establish international links during the war. Close to them stood Hugo Haase, a close disciple of August Bebel who differed from them on the question of international action for peace and therefore favoured participation in the conference at Zimmerwald. In the centre stood a group around Georg Ledebour and Adolf Hoffmann and on the left stood a larger group around Luxemburg and Liebknecht and smaller groupings around Julian Borchardt's journal Lichtstrahlen and the supporters of Anton Pannekoek and Karl Radek.

The Luxemburg-Liebknecht group, centred in Berlin formed the Spartakusbund in March 1916, espousing the positions and slogans of the Junius brochure, and emphasising the need for a reconstructed *disciplined* International.

As against this process of development and these positions we will now examine the development of the Bolsheviks in the first year of the War.

THE BOLSHEVIKS HAMMER OUT A WAR PROGRAMME

On September 5th Lenin arrived in Berne and immediately drafted his 'Theses on the War'. These defined the war as "bourgeois, imperialist and dynastic" condemned the German Social-Democrats behaviour as a "betrayal of socialism" and that of the Allied socialists as being "just as reprehensible". From these acts Lenin's theses went on to proclaim the "ideological and political bankruptcy of the International" pointing out that this had long been prepared for by the pre-war opportunists. The "Centre" of the German and other parties had now capitulated to these opportunists and Lenin concluded

"It must be the task of the future International resolutely and irrevocably to rid itself of this bourgeois trend in socialism."

The central task facing the working class during the war was to work for *"the socialist revolution and the need to use weapons not against their brothers, the wage slaves in other countries but against the reactionary and bourgeois governments and parties of all countries."* (36)

In November Lenin clarified this position further. In the party central committee statement 'The War and Russian Social Democracy' it stated "The conversion of the present imperialist war into a civil war is the only correct proletarian slogan." In an article published simultaneously Lenin put forward the need for a definitive break, not only with the Second International, not only with the outright traitors but with the opportunism which had marked its life before the great betrayal.

"The Second International is dead, overcome by opportunism. Down with opportunism, and long live the Third International, purged not only of 'turncoats' (as 'Golos' wishes), but of opportunism as well." (37)

Kautsky adopted from the outset a position of providing 'Left' or 'Marxist' covering for the social-chauvinists. He accorded to all Social-Democrats the right to defend their own fatherlands. He held that "The International is not an effective weapon in war time; it is essentially a weapon of peace." He denied that Imperialist war was intrinsic to capitalism. The proletariat should limit itself to working for peace. He was joined in this position by right-centrists in various countries - including Ramsey Macdonald in Britain. Lenin condemned this covering up of social chauvinism as the basest renegacy.

By the end of 1914 three tendencies had emerged. The outright chauvinists, the outright opponents of the war and what Lenin called "confused and vacillating people, who at present are following in the wake of the opportunists and are causing the proletariat most harm by their hypocritical attempts to justify opportunism . . ." Some within this centrist tendency could be won back but only by the resolute pursuit of a total break with and denunciation of the chauvinists and the espousal of the perspective of turning the Imperialist War into a Civil War. Given the Imperialist nature of the war Lenin further insisted that revolts of oppressed nations against their oppressors should be supported - a position he emphatically adopted over the Irish Rising of 1916.

On the basis of such a programme the Bolsheviks found themselves in a minority amongst anti-war socialists. The German Left made their first major statement on the war in the Junius pamphlet, penned by Luxemburg in April 1915. Lenin compared the pamphlet unfavourably with the position of the Bolsheviks. Compared with their Manifesto "it only becomes clear that Junius's arguments are very incomplete" While noting that the pamphlet does not issue a clear call for a civil war against the European bourgeoisies, a class war for socialism. The Junius formulation was "both victory and defeat in the present war are equally fatal for the German people." Lenin's criticism concentrated on two major points. Firstly the pamphlet talked of the treachery of Social Democracy without either explaining it or specifically condemning opportunism in its pre-war Kautskyist form. *"Neither the Junius pamphlet nor the theses say anything about opportunism or about Kautskyism! This is wrong from*

the standpoint of theory, for it is impossible to account for the "betrayal" without linking it up with opportunism as a trend with a long history behind it, the history of the whole Second International." (38)

Secondly the pamphlet stated that "national wars are no longer possible", that Imperialism had rendered all national wars reactionary. Lenin took particular exception to this formulation because he considered it opened the way to two particularly dangerous and potentially reactionary positions *"it gives rise to the absurd propaganda of 'disarmament' since it is alleged that there can be no wars except reactionary wars."* (39)

The Bolsheviks saw that a new International could only be built in total opposition to disarmament schemes and pacifist utopias.

IMPERIALISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The second and more important implication of the Junius formulation was its implied attitude to national struggles against Imperialism

"it also gives rise to the even more ludicrous and downright reactionary attitude of indifference to national movements. And such an attitude becomes chauvinism when members of the 'great' European nations, that is, the nations which oppress the mass of small and colonial peoples, declare with a pseudo-scientific air: 'national wars are no longer possible' " (40)

National wars were not only possible, Lenin argued, but should be supported when they were fought against Imperialist oppression.

"National wars against the Imperialist powers are not only possible and probable: they are inevitable, progressive and revolutionary though of course, to be successful, they require either the concerted effort of huge numbers of people in the oppressed countries . . . or a particularly favourable conjuncture of international conditions . . . or the simultaneous uprising of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in one of the big powers." (41)

Lenin's support of the national struggle against Imperialism was not an abstract nature of principle. Lenin saw the national struggle as progressive against the world system of Imperialism - a necessary component of the struggle against that system. This position flowed from his analysis of the the Imperialist world economy. His critique of Junius focuses on the implications of Luxemburg's formulations. Other sections of 'Internationalists' were to take up the campaign against the 'right of nations to self-determination' more actively. In struggling against them Lenin was struggling for a programme to fight capitalism in its Imperialist stage.

Bukharin and Pyatakov in the Russian party, the Polish and Dutch socialists drew different conclusions to Lenin from the analysis of Imperialism. Imperialism was now triumphant as a militarist world system. It had extinguished all national and democratic rights. In so doing Imperialism had rendered redundant the old minimum programmes of social democracy - the demands for democracy and reform. In fighting for socialism it was now utopian and backward looking to raise these democratic demands argued Pyatakov and Bukharin. They called for the dropping of the demands of the minimum programme as "contradictory to the socialist programme". As a triumphant international system Imperialism had also rendered all national struggles, struggles for national independence historically reactionary. Hence Bukharin and Pyatakov's opposition to supporting the right of nations to self-determination. In undialectical fashion Bukharin had reduced political struggle and demands to an economic analysis. In recognising with Lenin the necessity for a programme for socialist revolution, Bukharin could not understand the role that organisation around democratic demands, or national struggles against imperialism, could play as links in that programme. In this way he repeated on an international scale the methodology of the Economists in Russian Social Democracy - arguing that political struggle for

economic demands was no concern of the proletariat because of the nature of the Imperialist world economy. - Lenin characterised Bukharin and Pyatakov as Imperialist Economists. *"he cannot solve the problem of how to link the advent of imperialism with the struggle for reforms and democracy - just as the Economism of blessed memory could not link the advent of capitalism with the struggle for democracy."* (42)

BUKHARIN ON THE STATE

For Bukharin this analysis flowed from an undialectical method. He confused a clear tendency in Imperialist world economy towards statification with the actual triumph of State Capitalism.

"the state becomes more and more a direct exploiter, which organises and directs production as a collective, composite capitalist."

"Thus arises the final type of the contemporary imperialist bandit state, the iron organisation which in its grasping, prehensile paws seizes the living body of society."

(N. Bukharin: On the theory of the Imperialist State 1916. R.V. Daniels: A Documentary history of Communist vol 1 p.83-86)

Bukharin argued that *either* the new totalitarian state would proceed to devour the workers organisations, and all democratic rights *or* the working class would "outgrow the framework of the state and burst it from within, as they organise their own state power." There were no other possibilities. It therefore followed that the minimum and democratic demands of Social Democracy were rendered historically redundant, a barren utopia, by this new Leviathan, "in the face of which the fantasy of Thomas Hobbes seem like child's play."

Lenin detected in Bukharin an undialectical projection of what was a definite historical tendency into an already accomplished fact.

He realized that if the tendency of the imperialist state was to suppress democratic freedoms then this would inevitably engender struggles to defend them on the part of the working class and other oppressed and exploited strata. However democratic rights could no longer be seen as a stable norm, intrinsic to fully developed capitalism, the struggle over them would have to be integrally linked to the struggle for socialism —the division into two programmes maximum and minimum overcome. However Bukharin's desire to suppress the minimum programme altogether seemed to Lenin to abandon the utilization of a central contradiction of imperialism against itself.

Before the war Pannekoek had argued against Kautsky for example

"the struggle of the proletariat is not merely a struggle against the bourgeoisie, for state power, but a struggle against state power..."

(quoted by Lenin in 'State and Revolution' CW vol 25 p.283) Lenin had feared here a rebirth of anarchism in the international left. His marginal notes to Bukharin's "The Imperialist Robber State" (see Lenin Marxism on the State: Moscow 1972 p.102-7) dwelt on Bukharin's "wrong, incomplete" distinction between anarchists and socialists on the question of the state. Lenin's views however changed.

Whilst rejecting Bukharin's undialectical method, and Pannekoek's loose formulations, whilst remaining deeply suspicious of any tendency to anarchism Lenin himself came to rediscover the profound anti-statism of the revolutionary marxist tradition. Whilst opposing all concessions to the anarchist programme of abolishing the state as such, Lenin by the April Theses of 1917 was to recognise as essential to the programme of revolutionary marxism the smashing of the bourgeois state machine, its replacement with a new form of state power 'the commune state' of the proletarian dictatorship. 'State and Revolution' researched and written in August-September 1917 represents the mature formulation of Lenin's position on the state, a work which is a sustained

attack on the Kautskyan position of taking over the state machine. The plan for the work included a final chapter, never completed, on the "necessity of changing the programme of the Social Democrats." (Lenin: Marxism on the state. p.86)

This fundamental change of programme, the re-affirmation of the revolutionary position of Marx & Engels with regard to the Paris Commune was re-asserted by Lenin against the orthodox social-democracy of the Second International. Lenin was forced to realise that Bukharin and Pannekoek in their earlier disputes with Kautsky had been on the right track; that their work had raised the necessity, even if in an undialectical fashion, of placing the smashing of the bourgeois state machine at the centre of the marxist programme.

LENIN AGAINST TROTSKY

In his comradely criticism of the Junius pamphlet, in his polemic with Bukharin Lenin was fighting for the programmatic base for unity of the communist left. He did this 'against the stream' of anti-war socialists who believed that a new unity could be forged between all socialists who opposed the war.

This current was particularly strong in Russian Social Democracy. The Menshevik paper Golos, based in Paris, came out against the war and those Russian socialists such as Plekhanov who had succumbed to social chauvinism. Around the successor to Golos, Nashe Slovo (founded in January 1915) there was a significant regroupment of Russian anti-war socialists. The paper grouped together, in 1915, Trotsky, Martov, Lunacharsky as well as Ryazanov, Lozovsky and Balabanov. This regroupment of ex-Bolshevik and non-Bolshevik anti-war socialists argued that the old divisions within Russian social-democracy were now redundant, that the Bolsheviks were sectarian for maintaining their organisational independence and separation.

Nashe Slovo had no unifying line either against the war or against the "socialist" war-mongers. Martov, for example, while opposing the war, considered it wrong to charge the social-patriots with treason to the workers movement. When the head of the Menshevik Duma delegation Chkheidze refused to wholeheartedly support the September 1915 Zimmerwald conference of anti-war socialists the editorials of Nashe Slovo did not attack him or the other Menshevik Duma deputies. The paper's heterogeneity gave it a vacillating line on the war. While the Bolsheviks called for *defeat* of the Russian Autocracy against those socialists who maintained a position of "defending the fatherland" against aggression, Nashe Slovo was ambivalent. While the Bolsheviks called for turning the Imperialist war into a civil war against those socialists who called for peace without indemnity - Nashe Slovo was evasive, and internally contradictory. The principle platforms of the paper were opposition to the imperialist war, and the call to re-unify "internationalist" Social-Democracy - to re-unify all those who had not crossed to the camp of supporting the war,

Against this 'unity offensive' the Bolsheviks maintained absolute organisational and programmatic independence. *"We are told that division 'along the line of opportunism' is outmoded, and that only one division is of significance, namely, that between the adherents of internationalism and the adherents of national self-sufficiency. This opinion is fundamentally wrong. The concept of 'adherents of internationalism' is devoid of all content and meaning, if we do not concretely amplify it; any step towards such concrete amplification, however, will be an enumeration of features of hostility to opportunism. In practice, this will prove truer still. An adherent of internationalism who is not at the same time a most consistent and determined adversary of opportunism is a phantom, nothing more. Perhaps certain individuals of this type will honestly consider themselves 'internationalists'. However people are judged, not by what they think of themselves but by their political behaviour. The political behaviour of 'internationalists' who are not consistent and determined adversaries of opportunism will always aid and abet the nationalist trend."* (43)

To the Bolsheviks the appeals for unity from such quarters - nationally and internationally - concealed a failure to finally and irrevocably break with the politics of the opportunists, to wage a revolutionary campaign against the war and its accomplices in the labour movement.

"Nothing can restore the mass influence of the Sudekums, Plekhanov etc. Their authority has been so undermined that everywhere the police have to protect them. But by their propaganda of 'unity' and 'fatherland defense', by their striving to bring about a compromise by their efforts to draw a verbal veil over the deep-seated differences, the 'centrists' are causing the greatest damage to the labour movement, because they are impeding the final break-down of the social-chauvinists moral authority, and in that way are bolstering their influence on the masses and galvanising the corpse of the opportunist Second International."

The Nashe Slovo bloc proved an unstable grouping. Squeezed between the opportunists like Alexrod and the leftists like Trotsky and the Bolsheviks Martov resigned from the paper in April 1916. The split between Martov and the actual or future Leninists was not because Martov was a perpetrator of the 'historic betrayal' - in IMG terms he did not 'cross class lines' and support the war. The split was on the basis of Martov's failure to take up the fight against those who refused to irrevocably break with the 'betrayers'. Martov broke with Nashe Slovo treading his way back to the left flank of the opportunists. As is well known the most significant sections of the grouping around Nashe Slovo were won to the politics of Bolshevism as a result of the vigorous campaign waged against their positions by the Leninists, as a result of the revolutionary events of 1917. The majority of Nashe Slovo supporters proved to be 'subjective revolutionaries'. But their 'unity bloc' fell apart and they were obliged to rally to the clear 'defeatism' and 'civil war' positions of the Bolshevik party.

FROM ZIMMERWALD TO THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

As we have seen August 1914 was not an unforeseen or isolated event which changed everything within the Second International. It was a violent and radical *revelation* of the essence of the trends that had been disputed in the whole preceding period. The opportunists were revealed as social chauvinists, open allies of 'their own bourgeoisie' against the workers of other countries. The most intransigent opponents of this betrayal were to be found in parties like the Russian, the Bulgarian and the Dutch that had experienced splits before 1914. The Kautskyan Centre was revealed as incurably tied to the opportunists on the right whilst retaining a fondness for 'marxist' and pacifist phrase-mongering. Between these Right-Centrist and the clear perspective of the Bolsheviks existed a whole spectrum of individuals and tendencies. Within the Russian movement was Martov, who was temperamentally a Left-Centrist, able to vigorously condemn the war but totally unable to break from his Menshevik allies who were giving the war effort covert support. On the extreme left of this middle ground stood Trotsky and most of the Spartakus group. Personally courageous revolutionaries, they were unwilling to accept that the hardest blows had to be directed against Kautsky and the Centre who tried to divert the workers opposition to the war into pacifist phrases instead of preparing the proletariat to take the road of revolution. Fear of total isolation from the deceived masses held them back from clearly placing the proletarian revolution rather than 'the struggle for peace' at the centre of their war programme. They were therefore unwilling to face the question of *defeatism* squarely. Luxemburg for instance, in the Junius brochure after stating that 'victory or defeat... would be equally disastrous' concludes

"The overthrow of war, and the speedy forcing of peace, by the international revolutionary action of the proletariat, alone can bring to it the only possible victory." (44)

She then goes on to advance the slogan not of international proletarian revolution as the central strategic objective of the anti-war movement but instead

" - the old, truly national programme of the patriots and democrats of 1848, the programme of Marx, Engels, Lassalle - the slogan of a united Great German Republic." (45)

Associated with this slogan was to be the whole gamut of democratic demands - the arming of the whole people in a democratic militia and the dissolution of the standing army, the decision on war or peace to be in the hands of the whole people, a permanent session of parliament, the removal of all political and legal restrictions and inequalities etc. Rosa dangerously equates the winning of these objectives with real 'defence of the fatherland' and as the only basis for 'national defence'.

Whilst Lenin in no wise rejected the use of the 'minimum programme', of democratic demands, he did reject them as the central objective in mobilising the proletariat against the war. He characterised Rosa's use of them as 'looking backwards' to the period when the class struggle coincided with the epoch of bourgeois revolutions in the 1848 period. For him the Imperialist war opened the epoch of proletarian revolution.

A similar evasiveness characterised Trotsky's positions. The slogans he raised 'Immediate cessation of the War', 'No Reparations, the Right of Every Nation to Self-Determination. The United States of Europe - Without Monarchies, Without Standing Armies, Without Ruling Feudal Castes, Without Secret Diplomacy' (46) contained a similar evasion.

Again for Lenin these demands because they restricted themselves within the limits of bourgeois democracy were an inadequate basis for class struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie, and ran dangerously close to the pacifist utopias of the centre groupings.

Thus when the first International focus for concerted opposition to the war presented itself Lenin found himself and the Bolsheviks in opposition not only to the Centre represented by the Kautsky-Haase-Ledebour group in Germany, but also to the Spartakus Group and the 'Nashe Slovo' group as well.

On September 5th 1915, 38 delegates met in the Swiss village of Zimmerwald. Lenin had already contacted a number of the most intransigent oppositionists with a view to creating a Left-Wing within the International Conference. He drew up a draft Manifesto to put before it.

This draft started by characterising Imperialism as the 'highest stage of capitalism' where the objective conditions for socialism have fully matured. It defines the war as Imperialist - ie for the repartitioning of colonies and from this, exposes the claim of 'fatherland defence to be bogus' in all the major combatants. It would be justified however in the case of an exploited and oppressed nation - ie in the colonies. It was the duty of socialists to agitate against the war, not restricting themselves in any way

'from considerations of the defeat of their own country'.

The objectives of this agitation was

'to turn the Imperialist war between the peoples into a civil war of the oppressed classes against their oppressors, a war for the expropriation of the class of capitalists, for the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the realisation of socialism.' (47)

With regard to the necessary split which revolutionary socialists must effect, the declaration was clear that it must include a break with *Centrism* as well.

"The working class cannot achieve its historic aims without waging a most resolute struggle against both forthright opportunism and social-chauvinism. . . and the so-called Centre, which has surrendered the Marxist stand to the Chauvinists." (48)

The Bolsheviks remained in a small minority at Zimmerwald but they did draw towards them a few delegates from other countries. Six delegates joined the Bolsheviks' two in constituting the hard core 'Zimmerwald Left'. A further four voted for Lenin's draft of the declaration, whilst the remaining nineteen remained attached to the Centre. The right-centrists Haase and Co refused point-blank to have any denunciation of the social-chauvinists as traitors who must be split with, included in this declaration. Further they even refused to be tied unambiguously to voting against war-credits.

The position adopted by the Spartakus group and the Nashe

Slovo group was again ambivalent, siding with the Bolsheviks over denunciation of the Social-Chauvinists and the demand to vote against war credits, they rejected Lenin's position of defeatism and the turning of the Imperialist War into a Civil War. Ernst Meyer, representing the Spartakusbund said "*there is hardly a fractional number of the German proletariat which would be prepared for action as proposed by Lenin's manifesto.*"

Trotsky oscillated between support for the Zimmerwald Left (on war credits; he also gave support to taking Lenin's draft of the manifesto as the basis for discussion, dissenting on the 'defeatism' issue) and a willingness to act as conciliator between them and the Centrist majority. In this role he himself drafted the final manifesto, a ringing but evasive declaration against the War. Lenin criticised it vigorously as showing "inconsistency, timidity, and a failure to say everything that ought to be said". Lenin seriously considered whether or not to vote for the final Manifesto. He was eventually persuaded by the other members of the Zimmerwald Left that a vote for it was necessary - that it was principled precisely because the Left had distinguished themselves from the Centrists at every stage

"- a separate resolution, a separate draft manifesto and a separate declaration on the vote for a compromise manifesto. We did not conceal a jot of our views, slogans or tactics."

To refuse to take this 'step forward' towards a rupture with opportunism would be, he concluded, sectarianism "when we retain full freedom and full opportunity to criticise inconsistency and to work for greater things." (50)

This criticism was maintained by the separate organisation of the Left-Zimmerwaldists around separate organs. The 'Internationale Flugblätter' and later a review 'Vorbote' which drew into their ranks the Dutch grouping around Gorter, Roland-Holst and Pannekoek, the Swiss leftist Fritz Platten and the Scandinavian Høglund. Lenin continued his pre-war method of extremely sharp attacks on those lefts who continued the policy of conciliation. In February 1916, Lenin attacked sharply what he saw as a right-turn by the Spartakus group; "... this group is wavering; the majority in it are clearly turning back to the marsh" (51). Zetkin he accused of a 'sham struggle' against Kautsky. With Trotsky Lenin was even harsher.

"What are our differences with Trotsky? In brief he is a Kautskyite, that is he stands for unity with the Kautskyites in the International and with Chkheidze's parliamentary group in Russia. We are absolutely against such unity." Even with those closely involved with the Zimmerwald Left Lenin could be unsparing. Karl Radek was one of his closest International collaborators. A representative of a section of the Polish Social Democracy, he worked in the early years of the war with Liebknecht and Borchardt in Berlin and with the Bremen and Hamburg Internationalists. Moving to Switzerland he had close contacts with Lenin and Zinoviev and also with Trotsky. He disagreed with Lenin however on the necessity for the proclamation of the need to split with the old Social-Democratic parties. As he later put it "being still under the influence of the state of German social-democracy, I considered that the path to civil war was still a long one, and that it was premature to raise the question of a split" (53).

Lenin summed up his method with regard to figures like Radek thus: "Radek is the best of them, it has been useful to work with him (especially for the Zimmerwald Left) and so we worked. But Radek too vacillates. Our tactic here is two-fold . . . on the one hand to help Radek move to the left, to unite all possible for the Zimmerwald Left. On the other hand not by one iota to allow vacillating on the basic positions". (54) Trotsky came under the heaviest blows from Lenin precisely because he stood on the extreme left of the left Centrist bloc, because he gave it the best marxist formulations. These attacks had in the long run a profoundly positive effect on Trotsky. Given that he was personally a brilliant and courageous revolutionary these attacks could not help but sting bitterly. Within the 'Nashe Slovo' bloc he came closer to the ex-Bolsheviks Lunacharsky, Lozovsky and to Radek who contributed to the paper. Conversely he came into ever more bitter conflict with Martov. Lunacharsky in his *Revolutionary Silhouettes* recalls Trotsky's attempts to "Persuade Martov to

break his links with the Defencists" and how 'Trotsky attacked him extremely angrily'. Eventually in April 1916 the split with Martov came.

At the same time (from 24 to 30th April 1916) the Second International conference met at Kienthal in Switzerland. This time 44 delegates assembled. Again the Left came forward with an even sharper posing of the key questions. A stable democratic peace is impossible under Imperialism. An Imperialist peace settlement will be reactionary, pregnant with future wars, carrying with it hunger, unemployment, and national oppression. Therefore the 'Peace without Annexations' slogans are utopian illusions. On the other hand the masses have been roused to fury by the carnage of bloodshed of the war. The duty of revolutionaries is to give a lead to the masses, to point the direction to the socialist revolution. The Kautskyan centre is performing the worst deception on the masses by preceding unity with the social chauvinists and directing the workers to wards an Imperialist Peace settlement (disguised in utopian rhetoric). A revolutionary situation is developing as the war progresses. To take advantage of this, the proletarian vanguard nationally and internationally must split from the old parties and International. The new parties must carry out revolutionary tactics subordinating the struggle for reforms to the perspective of revolution and prepared organisationally for this task, capable of illegal work etc.

The Lefts remained in a small minority and though some of the conference resolutions manifested an increase in verbal radicalism, the outcome was that the conference refused to "decree and create artificially a new international." Immediately after the conference the bulk of the Centrists began to move rightwards. They undertook, with the representatives of 'neutral' parties like the SP of the USA, to attempt to re-convene the old International Socialist Bureau as a prelude to calling a conference of the Second International.

Lenin on the other hand was increasingly certain that a break was necessary with Zimmerwald. That the latter had become the preserve of the Centre and that the centrists were the key opponents of the coming revolutions. In notes he drew up on "the Centre as a Trend in International Social Democracy" he enumerated a number of key features. Firstly their refusal to split with the Social-Patriots and their own evasiveness on fatherland defence. The 'passive radicalism' of their criticism of reformism, their opposition to 'reconstruction of the present Social Democratic Parties and trade unions, nothing like Liebknecht's 'regeneration from top to bottom' and their refusal to prepare by propaganda and organisation for revolution. (55) This was written in January 1917. Simultaneously Lenin prepared to make a final decisive intervention in The Zimmerwald milieu. He drew up an appeal to the ISC (the Zimmerwald Executive). Pointing out that the Left only supported Zimmerwald "insofar as it combats social chauvinism" he concluded:

"It has now been definitely established - of this we are foundly convinced - that the Zimmerwald majority, or the Zimmerwald Right, has made a roundabout turn not towards complete surrender to it, towards merger with it on a platform of empty pacifist phrases. And we consider it our duty openly to state that to support, in these circumstances, the illusion of Zimmerwald unity and Zimmerwald struggle for the Third International would cause the greatest damage to the labour movement. We declare not as a "threat" or as an "ultimatum", but as an open notification of our decision that unless the situation changes we shall not remain a member of the Zimmerwald group." (56)

Events however caught up with this manoeuvre. Revolution broke out in Russia and it was April before Lenin could return to the question of how to break the Zimmerwald bloc and move forward towards the creation of the Third International. At the April Conference Lenin through the medium of the famous Theses was attempting to put the party on a firm basis not simply with regard to the specific goals and objectives of the Russian proletariat (the definition of the revolution ahead as a proletarian revolution) was attempting to re-forge the party around those fundamental positions that the Bolsheviks had worked out during the war.

Thus on the question of 'fatherland defence', Lenin, unlike

the Mensheviks who had rested their opposition to the war on the undemocratic nature of Tsarism and who were after February transformed into rabid defencists, did not abate one jot of his former position. Whilst the Mensheviks followed, albeit belatedly, the course of the western social-chauvinists into the war cabinet and the 'social truce', the Bolsheviks alone stood prepared to 'turn the Imperialist war into Civil war not in words but in deeds. At the April Conference Lenin immediately raised the question of altering the party programme. Indeed he produced a draft platform "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution" circulated to delegates in typescript copies. The platform embodied the political and economic analysis Lenin had devoted himself to in Switzerland, the analysis of Imperialism, the war and the epoch of revolution it had inaugurated. Further it embodied Lenin's rediscovery of Marx and Engels positions on the State. The last three sections sum up the key lessons of the struggle against Social-Chauvinism and Centrism. Firstly Lenin enumerates the three trends within the working class. The Social-Chauvinists who are class enemies' and 'bourgeois within the working class movement' representing the corrupted bureaucracy and the labour aristocracy. Secondly there are the Centrists who Lenin defines as 'routine worshippers' not a separate stratum historically and economically but a transitional formation vacillating between social-chauvinists and the true internationalists. This latter trend Lenin defines as those who have effected a 'complete break with both social-chauvinism and "centrism"'. He mentions within this trend the Zimmerwald Leftist and the Spartakus Group. A whole section is devoted to "the Collapse of the Zimmerwald International - The need for Founding a Third International". Lenin concludes that 'the Zimmerwald bog can no longer be tolerated' and that "we must break with this International immediately". Against the argument that the masses are still with the Chauvinists and Centrists, Lenin affirms that what is central is 'giving correct expression to the ideas and policies of the truly revolutionary proletariat' and that therefore the Bolsheviks should not wait for a congress but "immediately found a Third International". Lenin held this position not out of some abstract purity, not because he did not believe that millions of honest proletarians as well as hundreds of thousands of the better cadre could not be won over but because "Whoever wants to help the waverers must first stop wavering himself". Lastly Lenin proposed the abandonment by the Bolsheviks of the name "Social-Democrat". He recalled the original objections of Marx and Engels to the name - ie that democracy is a form of state whereas proletarian revolutionaries aim at the dictatorship of the proletariat - already only a semi-state and beyond that to 'the withering away of the state'. To this reason there had been added the treason of the Second International. Lenin drew the conclusion that "it is time to cast off the soiled shirt and to put on clean linen" and to resume the name that Marx and Engels had always used of them themselves. - Communist.

It was to take a further two years before Lenin could achieve this programme. Initially the majority of the Bolsheviks reacted against these proposals. The party refused to withdraw from Zimmerwald, and the process of changing the programme and name of the party took until after the October revolution. The foundation of the Third International took a further two years. However the process of winning the best elements was well underway. Trotsky the ex-members of the Nashe Slovo group, individuals like Radek, the 'Inter-district Organisation', were finally won to Bolshevism. The impact of the successful October revolution gave a powerful impetus to this tendency on a European and World scale. But all this was possible only on the basis of the isolated 'swimming against the stream' of the 1914 - 16 period.

CONCLUSION

We have seen how a left-wing developed within two parties of the Second International—the SPD and the RSDLP in the period 1900 to 1914. In both cases this left wing developed

from criticism of the opportunist approach to tactics in this period. We have observed that a resolute struggle over tactics revealed three tendencies, reformism centrism & communism. In Russia this struggle led to a definite split in 1912, a split between Bolshevism and the liquidators & conciliators. This split immeasurably strengthened the revolutionary forces preparing them for the debacle of 1914, and preparing the Bolsheviks to act as the fixed pole around which all the healthy revolutionary elements were to rally from 1915 to 1919.

The failure of this process to occur in Germany weakened the Left-Radicals & precluded their playing this role. Indeed it took the pressure of Bolshevik criticism and the powerful attraction of October to pull them onto the firm ground of a consistently revolutionary strategy & tactics.

Any analysis such as that of the IMG/USFI which tries to present the pre-1914 battles as mere tendencies within Marxism is in fact an attempt to unlearn and obscure these lessons. Furthermore this approach ignores the importance of the struggle against *centrism*, crudely equating this with Reformism. The view of the great event—1914, the 'crossing of class lines' as an all-transforming event is profoundly undialectical and holds enormous implications for revolutionary practice. Unity is predicated on the avoidance of an historic act of betrayal. It is the highest good & to it must be sacrificed the presentation of a correct strategy & effective tactics if those who stand by them are unable to win a majority within the given party & international. As we have seen, and as we will see in our next article on the Comintern, Lenin was never so lightminded as to suggest sending the proletariat into life or death battles armed with dud weapons and under incompetent or treacherous leadership on the pretext that the latter had to prove themselves unworthy in a great test. Before 1914 he foresaw the treachery of the Bernsteins & and the Axelrods & was resolutely in favour of expelling them—of splitting with them. They were already a 'bourgeois trend'. Centrism he observed in its embryonic form—conciliationism. Within the Russian party he made only those radical compromises which would firstly not obliterate the revolutionary programme or dissolve the organized cadre of the party and secondly which would assist the honest elements amongst the centrists to find their way back to communism. These compromises were only made subject to the clearest & harshest criticism of every weakness and vacillation.

Centrism was not as Lenin observed a fixed stratum—it was a transitional formation and was given a powerful impetus by periods of transition. Thus whilst the principles of Reformism & Communism bear a certain fixed character, Centrism is more specific to concrete circumstances borrowing (eclectically) from its neighbours to right and left as the working class moves towards or away from revolutionary action.

Ominous indeed, for themselves, is the IMG/USFI's writing out of history of Centrism & the struggle against it. Trotsky himself was to point out the source of this blindness "A centrist readily proclaims his hostility to reformism but he does not mention centrism. Moreover, he considers the very definition of centrism as 'unclear', 'arbitrary' etc; in other words, centrism does not like to be called by its name."

Ominous too is the 'anti-sectarian' zeal of the IMG/USFI which extends to 'rescuing' Lenin from the danger of being in favour of any kind of split before 1914 (except on the grounds of breach of discipline) and of being in favour of a resolute split only with those who 'crossed class lines' thereafter. This amounts to philistine indifference to the crucial battles over strategy & tactics which Lenin by no means subordinated to a fetish of a united party within which tendencies would harmoniously debate. The IMG are well aware that the epithet sectarian which jumps so readily to their lips is used so widely that it strikes at the whole record & tradition of Lenin Trotsky and Bolshevism. So they have to attempt square the circle in defence of their own practice—a practice which involves a persistent tailism, accommodation to left-reformist worthies for whom a role as unwitting midwife to a 'class struggle tendency' is 'projected'. That these

concessions are made in relatively 'peaceful' conditions does not give great hope as to what such a tendency will do faced with a 'great event'. Meantime we are urged to help create a 'unified revolutionary organization' and 'an International' with all those who passed the historic tests of the century. We prefer to learn from Lenin's method of relentless struggle against opportunist in organizational & tactical matters, believing with him that persistent error on these questions cannot be divorced from programmatic degeneration & that that unity is desirable which brings together resolute opponents of opportunism on an *operative* programme. One that delineates on the basis of historic & international experience Key tactics within an overall strategy focussed on solving the question of proletarian power within a specific period and situation. In the next article in this series we will deal with the way this occurred within the Comintern in the years 1919-1923.

Footnotes

1. For a fuller analysis see Workers Power No 4
2. Quoted by Trotsky: 'Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg. Writings 1932 p.134
3. 'Rosa Luxemburg Speaks' p.83
4. Ibid p.71
5. Ibid p.91-82
6. Ibid p.162
7. Ibid p.203
8. Ibid p.204
9. Ibid p.185
10. K. Kautsky: The Road to Power p.126
11. Ibid p.127
12. Rosa Luxemburg: The Accumulation of Capital p.365-6
13. Ibid p.454
14. Ibid p.446
15. N. Bukharin: Imperialism and World Economy p.103
16. Quoted in Haupt: Socialism and the Great War
17. Quoted in C. Schorske: German Social Democracy 1905-1917
18. New Left Review No 59 p.41-46
19. Ibid
20. Ibid
21. Ibid
22. Lenin Collected Works Vol 23 p.110
23. Ibid p.116 Lenin's emphasis
24. Ibid p.116
25. Ibid p.119
26. Lenin Vol 20 p.258
27. Letter to Inessa Armand dated April 8th 1914. C.W vol.43 p.397
28. Lenin Vol.20 p.258
29. Ibid p.232
30. On Marxist Theory and Revolutionary Tactics - Pannekoek 'Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism' ed. D.A. Smart p.52
31. Luxemburg and the Fourth International
32. Rosa Luxemburg Speaks p.439
33. E. Mandel: 'Rosa and German Social Democracy.' International. Summer 1977.
34. Ibid
35. 'What Next?' Lenin Collected Works Vol.21 p.III
36. Lenin Collected Works Vol.21 p.15 - 18
37. Lenin Collected Works Vol 21 p.40
38. Printed in 'Rosa Luxemburg Speaks' p.429
39. Ibid p.433
40. Ibid p.433 - 434
41. Ibid p.434. Lenin's emphasis.
42. Lenin Vol.23 p.15
43. Lenin: 'Under a False Flag'. Vol 21 p.156
44. 'Rosa Luxemburg Speaks' ed. Mary Alice Waters. p.323
45. 'Rosa Luxemburg Speaks'
46. 'The War and the International' L. Trotsky p.74
47. Lenin Collected Works vol 21 pp.347/48
48. Ibid pp.346/7
49. Cited in Braunthall p.47
50. Lenin Collected Works vol 21 p.387
51. Lenin Collected Works vol 43 p.510
52. Ibid. p.515
53. 'Makers of the Russian Revolution' ed. Georges Haupt Jean-Jacques Marie p.371
54. Lenin Collected Works vol 23 p.215
55. Lenin Collected Works vol 41 p.391
56. Lenin Collected Works vol 23 p.216

BOOK REVIEWS

Eurocommunism and the State

SANTIAGO CARRILLO

Publisher: Lawrence and Wishart

Santiago Carrillo, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Spain, ranks as one of the most experienced counter-revolutionaries in the world. Forty years after playing a leading role in the defeat of the Spanish working class, he is now trying to make sure they do not rise again. This book is an important element in that attempt.

The question of the State, its nature and the relationship of the working class to it, is the pivotal point of Marxism. Marx himself believed that his discovery, "that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat," was his most important. Lenin, following Marx, argued, "only he is a Marxist who extends recognition of the class struggle to recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat." The implications of this position are perfectly obvious, a party can only lead the working class to power if it recognises the need to smash the bourgeois state and replace it with proletarian dictatorship.

Carrillo, of course, is more interested in the converse of this: if a party does not recognise the need to smash the bourgeois state it will not lead the working class to power. *Eurocommunism and the State* argues that the state need not, indeed must not, be smashed. It is Carrillo's latest contribution to keeping the Spanish working class out of power. It is, moreover, an olive branch to the bourgeoisie, assuring them that the Stalinists can be trusted in any future power-sharing agreement. The Eurocommunists want to have their cake and eat it, to gain power on the backs of the workers—the better to sit on them thereafter.

Carrillo's approach to the problem is characteristically sly. Unable and unwilling to shed the mantle of Marx and Lenin, he has instead to transform their writings into harmless relics of a bygone age. Thus, we find, "The present day state . . . is still the instrument of class domination defined by Marx, Engels and Lenin, but its structures are far more complex, more contradictory than those known to the Marxist teachers, and its relations to society have quite different characteristics . . ." (p22) In case it is not altogether clear how the state can still be an instrument of class domination and nonetheless have quite different relations with society, Carrillo expands his point, "The state appears today, ever more clearly, as the *director* state in all spheres, particularly the economy. And since it is the *director* state, which no longer serves the interest of the whole of the bourgeoisie, but only of that part which controls the big monopolistic groups, economically

fundamental but, humanly speaking, very small, it is now confronted, in its capacity as such a state, not only by the advanced proletariat but also directly by the broadest social classes, including part of the bourgeoisie, it is entering into direct conflict with the greater part of society." (p24 SC emp) How very reassuring this must be for the Spanish workers confronted as they are by an only slightly modified state. "Never mind all that," says Carrillo, "never mind the fact that the most wealthy, the most powerful, most fundamental elements of the bourgeois still use the state to oppress you. Never mind that they can now use it to direct the economy more effectively in their own interests, after all, humanly speaking, there's not many of them. Besides, on our side we've even got some of the non-fundamental ones"

In underlining the point Carrillo also manages to do away with the class struggle in passing, "vast social common interests are created, impossible in other times, between consumer and retailer against price policies, between farmers and consumers and between the working class the forces of culture, the peasants and bourgeois sectors . . . the state is becoming less and less a *state for all* and more and more a *state for a few*." (p25 SC's emphasis)

Carrillo should at least acknowledge quotes, this last point originates in another polemic against Marxism, Kautsky's *The dictatorship of the proletariat*. Replying to the original, Lenin argued, "if it [the State] is a power standing above society and increasingly alienating itself from it, then it is obvious that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, *but also without the destruction* of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class and which is the embodiment of this 'alienation'." (*State and Revolution*, p9, Lenin's emphasis) This is, of course, quite apart from the anti-Marxist, a-historical idea that the state was ever "a state for all."

One of the problems confronting any reviser of Marxism is that once one element has been distorted it becomes necessary to get rid of all the rest as well. Carrillo's book is no exception to this. For example, in the course of arguing that the ideological superstructure of modern society can be turned against monopoly capitalism, Carrillo asserts that this is now the "key strategy" for socialists except, "in the case of war or economic catastrophe, *difficult to imagine* today in the developed countries." (p28, our emphasis) So, somewhere along the way, and presumably since Lenin, capitalism has transformed itself into a system of economic stability in which national rivalries have disappeared.

In case anybody should get the idea that Carrillo is a man of little imagination, it should be pointed out that he does imagine that an element of the Spanish Catholic Church will be on the side of the revolutionary working class. On the side of Santiago Carrillo perhaps . . . Indeed, in the works of the Jesuit obscurantist Teilhard de Chardin, Carrillo sees, "a fundamental work of revision . . . to bridge the gulf which separated official Catholicism from science." (How these revisionists love one another!)

Further on Carrillo turns his attention to another problem for reformists, the special bodies of armed men, or as Carrillo genteely puts it, "the coercive apparatus of the State". In Spain, more so than in many countries, there is a deep distrust of the para-military police and the army, a distrust rooted in the experience of the last fifty years. Carrillo recognises this, but, far from developing this distrust into a concrete understanding of the need to abolish the standing army, he wishes to diffuse it, explain it away and thus neutralise it. His conclusion is that the Left should oppose the state using the armed forces against its enemies, "The practice of the class struggle has led to a confrontation between the working people and those who make up its apparatuses. When there is a demonstration or a strike, it is not the managers of Banesto or Altos Hornos in Spain or the Banque de Paris in France, and so on in other countries, who go onto the streets and physically confront the strikers and demonstrators; it is the forces of order, the police, and in extreme cases the army. It is this role, which the state power of monopoly capitalism makes the armed forces play, that must be opposed." (9p55)

Thus, for Carrillo the army and police, far from being an integral part of the State, are entirely separate, presumably with no class base. So separate are they that the state has to force them to carry out its will against strikers and demonstrators. Incidentally, Carrillo goes on to explain that strikes should be seen as, "a matter for negotiation between employers' and workers' representatives. The preservation of order at demonstrations should be carried out by the demonstration organisers." No doubt the more far-sighted of the Spanish bourgeoisie will recognise what is being said here, that the Spanish CP undertakes to ensure that industrial disputes remain merely matters for negotiation and that order will be maintained on demonstrations.

Eurocommunism and the State is studded throughout with glaring revisions of the Marxist analysis of the State, every one of them rooted in dismissal of the idea of the class struggle and class analysis of society. It would be impossible, and unnecessary, to catalogue all of them here, they can be read in the original in an evening. However, it is necessary to consider, even if briefly, the underlying significance of the book in terms of the developing current of "Eurocommunism".

Trotsky argues that Stalinism and Social Democracy were not opposites but twins, both had betrayed the working class by rejecting Internationalism. However, where the Social Democrats lapsed into simple nationalism, defence of the fatherland in 1914, the Stalinists deserted the interests of the world working class in favour of those of the Stalin bureaucracy at the head of the Soviet state. The theory of Socialism in One Country allowed the development of national roads for each Stalinist party. Despite their supposed uniqueness to suit the specific conditions they worked in, all the Stalinist parties actually adopted the policy of the Popular Front, that is collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Within this position lay a contradiction that is only now, with the development of "Eurocommunism", fully asserting itself. The onset of a period of intense instability for the capitalist system allows the possibility of Stalinist parties gaining governmental power in several countries, their role in this is to act, once again, as the policemen of capital, entrusted with restricting the workers' movement to manageable dimensions. As such their highest 'ideal' is the defence of the "national interest", that is to say, the interests of their bourgeoisie. Thus, at long last the Stalinists have to confront the choice, "their" national interest—or that of the Soviet bureaucracy. Carrillo has no hesitation in siding with the Spanish bourgeoisie, "we Communists shall work for the strengthening, the advance of the country of our birth, so as to cooperate in that way in the progress of mankind and not in any way to subordinate our countries to others." That, in a nutshell, was the position of the traitors of the Second International. Gone is all pretence at internationalism, the interests of the working class disappear without trace in this plea for recognition from the enemies of our class. In Carrillo's case a particularly vile plea to the very people who murdered so many thousands of his own comrades. Mention has to be made of the way in which Carrillo distances himself from the Soviet Union, if only because some have seen in it the influence of Trotsky's analysis. For Carrillo, the degeneration in the Soviet Union was the product of many factors, underdevelopment, a hostile world environment, the particular personality of Stalin himself and so on. Of course no one could deny that this is true—simply because it is only a banal truism. The important point is that Carrillo nowhere suggests that an alternative course was possible both within the Soviet Union itself and in the strategies of the Comintern in, for example, China or Germany. With regard to Spain, of course, he cannot but say that the policy was correct even though it ended in disaster. The purpose of this 'analysis' is solely to convince his readers that he is a dyed in the wool democrat who will not challenge parliamentarianism, the freedom of the bourgeois press or infringe bourgeois legality. Only a *Socialist Challenge* reviewer could possibly see any connection between Carrillo and Trotsky on the question of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

The politics of "Eurocommunism" and the state are,

essentially, the politics of Social Democracy, of the 'Second International'. But this does not mean that the parties controlled by Carrillo and his ilk are now simply Social Democratic parties, that they have ceased to be Stalinist parties. As we have demonstrated, their programmes of class collaboration flow inexorably from the Stalinist theory of "Socialism in one Country", from the postulate that victorious 'socialism' in the USSR and East Europe (albeit in an undemocratic form) makes possible the peaceful road to socialism in the capitalist countries. For this reason the PCE of Carrillo, the Italian and French CPs, remain Stalinist parties, their reformism and class collaboration proceeds from the Stalinist programme.

This does not mean that the parties of Carrillo, Berlinguer and Marchais cannot become Social Democratic parties pure and simple. If they were to declare finally, that the USSR and East Europe were not socialist, that bourgeois democracy was a higher order of society than 'totalitarian' societies, if they were to side with their own bourgeois against the Soviet bureaucracy in a decisive conflict then we could talk of the Stalinist parties having crossed that particular Rubicon. Until that time revolutionaries must distinguish between the Stalinists and their Social Democratic 'twins'.

Because of their historical roots in the Bolshevik revolution and the organisational cohesiveness derived from the discipline of a democratic centralise model of the party, and despite their perversion of this tradition into its complete opposite, the Stalinist parties still organise and attract to their banner many of the most class-conscious and committed workers. This means that the leaders of the Eurocommunist parties, while they are well positioned to mislead and stifle the class, have also to try and justify their actions in terms of the aspirations of the day to day leadership of the class. It is at this obvious source of conflict within the Communist Parties, that revolutionaries have to aim their propaganda.

Steve MacSweeney

The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894–1933

by R.J. Evans,

published by Sage Editions

Despite its title this book covers the history of German Feminism from its organisational beginnings in 1865 to its eventual suppression by the Nazis in 1933. The 19th century in Germany was a period of social and political upheaval and Evans is careful to set his history against this background.

After the defeat of the 1848 Bourgeois revolution, Prussia slowly came to dominate Germany. This enforced unification brought not Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, but the repressive regime of the Junkers (landowners) who ruled through the bureaucracy, army and church. Within this society, women were denied the right to vote, to own property, go to university or even to attend political meetings, let alone join parties.

Evans, quite correctly, roots the development of German feminism in the fight of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women to gain these rights. Their ideologues were the bourgeois radicals, in particular John Stuart Mill, who demanded equality for women as the final step in the

creation of a perfect laissez-faire society. In 1865, the feminists founded the General German Women's Association with Louise Otto-Peters, a staunch Liberal, as President. This organisation, rather than agitating for full and equal rights, restricted itself to petitioning the Reichstag and doing charitable and welfare work.

It is in dealing with the latter part of the century, particularly the last two decades, that the major weakness of Evans' work becomes glaringly apparent. What is missing is any comparison between the politics and programmes of the feminist movement and those of the rapidly growing working class women's movement. The latter, the core of which was the female membership of the German Social Democracy (SPD), fought, often against the bitter opposition of their "enemy sisters" for a programme for working class women. Central to this were the demands for women's right to work, equal pay and protective legislation for women.

Unlike the feminists, Clara Zetkin and her comrades (a high proportion of whom were to split from the SPD after its traitorous support for the First World War) clearly understood that the emancipation of women was inextricably bound up with the fight for the socialist revolution. It was this position which led them into direct opposition to the "all-class" German women's movement.

The question of protective legislation was one of the key differences between the two movements in the early 1890s. The socialists recognised that women were the weakest and most exploited section of the working class and called for protective legislation whose standards could then be applied to all workers. For socialists to oppose this would have been to accept the additional exploitation of women in the name of so-called 'equality'. It was also a key demand with which to confront the capitalists and to win over the male working class to women's demands. The feminists, however, rejected it since it threatened their feminist demands for full equality with men. Their ideology would not permit any admission that women were weaker than men. In addition they were not prepared to support the struggles of working class women with whom they were often in competition for certain white-collar jobs. Finally the bulk of the feminist movement was not prepared to enter into direct confrontation with capital. For the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women of the feminist movement, the exploitation of working class women ranked in much the same order of importance as the beating of a dog. In 1908, for example, the paper, 'Women's Suffrage' proclaimed itself opposed to, *'the exploitation of the economically and physically weak, it takes pity on children and tormented animals, it makes laws against cruelty to animals and the exploitation of their working strength to exhaustion'*.

Taking up the struggle for the vote, the feminist movement formed the Suffrage Union and launched into the political arena. In the 1903 elections they were solidly behind the Liberal Party, although this party did not support their right to vote. Only the SPD took up this demand and launched a massive electoral campaign around it. This feminist support for the Liberals was not, however, the contradiction it seems. As the left wing of liberal individualism they were limited to struggling for the advances that the lost bourgeois revolution should have given them. Subsequently, with the repeal of the repressive Law of Association, which forbade women to enter politics, feminists flocked into the Liberal Party.

The Left wing of the feminist movement also expressed itself in the 'New Morality'. This movement, taking as its basic ideology the free expression of the individual self, campaigned for the extension of contraception and abortion and for marriage based on sexual love. One wing of this current turned to the glorification of motherhood, founding homes for unmarried mothers, but with heavy racist undertones. For example, they thought of setting up communes of unmarried mothers which would only let 'healthy' women participate.

Gradually the feminist movement moved further and further to the right. During the First World War all feminist work inside Germany ceased, with only a small group abroad arguing pacifist ideas. From then on the movement shrunk until its final suppression in 1933.

Evans' book, despite its limitations, is useful if read in conjunction with Werner Thonnessen's book ('The Emancipation of Women—The Rise and Decline of the Women's Movement in German Social Democracy', Pluto Press 1975). The latter deals solely with the socialist women's movement. If the two books are read together a fairly clear picture of the early years of the women's movement and its relation to the working class, emerges. A picture that has many relevant lessons for us today. Neither book, however, deals with the work of Zetkin and others in continuing to develop a strategy for communist work amongst women within the KPD and the Third International prior to its degeneration with the triumph of Stalinism. A history of this has still to be written. It is badly needed.

Engels

Engels David McLellan

Fontana Modern Masters Series 75p

'Radical intellectuals' who wish to rob Marxism of its role as a guide to revolutionary practice have always found it difficult to obtain a hearing amongst socialists by attacking Marx directly. One way round this problem for them is to re-interpret Marx by rejecting everything that offends them in his theory as due to the perversion of his work by Engels. David McLellan has undertaken a variant of this project, and has proved himself to be just such a reactionary in his latest book on Engels.

This slim volume is divided quite arbitrarily into five chapters on: his life, his writings on history, on politics, on philosophy and his relationship with Marx, as if one can be understood out of context of the others. The section on his life is particularly shallow, as this description of the events of 1848 indicates: *"The Communist League was dissolved as being unnecessary under the newly granted freedom of association and speech, and the two friends turned their attention to journalism."* At this point the book makes no attempt to consider the theoretical basis of Marx's and Engels' actions, after all, that is politics which comes in the next chapter.

When we do get to this next chapter, there is a lot of consideration given to the position, adopted in the Communist Manifesto, that a stagist strategy should be used, first supporting the liberal bourgeoisie against the feudalists, and only after the feudal state is smashed should the workers press on to Socialism. Mr McLellan gives no consideration at all to the reassessment that was made, in the light of the events of 1848, in the address of the central committee to the Communist League (March 1850). Here the need for independent working class political action at every stage of the revolution was stressed and the idea of the revolution in permanence was first formulated. Obviously Marx's stress on working class political action, independent of the liberal bourgeoisie is too much for Mr McLellan, and he follows the best Stalinist commentators on this.

The shortest chapter is that on philosophy, a mere eight pages, which ends up with the gem: *"But it is difficult to believe that Engels' view contains much of lasting value either to science or to philosophy. However as the basis for what came to be known as dialectical materialism they were undoubtedly of immense influence."* Assuming that Mr McLellan is not contradicting himself in the space of two sentences, one can therefore assume that he considers dialectical materialism is not of lasting value. This is indeed more than obvious from the rest of the book, but one marvels that he should put it so boldly in a book which attempts to give itself a gloss of sympathy for Marxism.

However the really serious part of the book comes when the relationship between Engels and the SPD is gone into. The old assertion that Engels thoroughly approved of the reformism of German Social Democracy is resurrected again. It is grudgingly admitted, for example, that the leaders of the SPD censored the revolutionary passages from Engels' Preface to the Class Struggles in France for publication in Germany, but this, and Engels' indignant rejection of being presented as a "peace at any price gradualist" is given no weight. The German revisionists successfully justified their reformism by selectively misquoting Engels, 80 years later, Mr McLellan is

trying to pull the teeth of Marxism by repeating the trick. Again the Marxist law of historical repetition appears to operate with all its accustomed vigour.

In conclusion it is asserted that while Engels did most to popularise Marxist philosophy in the mass socialist movement, he didn't 'really' understand what Marx meant. Therefore the whole subsequent development through Lenin and the rest is unmarxist. Frankly such an assertion, based on the intellectual short change of this book, tells us more about Mr McLellan than about Engels.

With so little written about the contribution made by Engels to the Communist movement*, it is a pity that the field has been left open to a prolific but nondescript Marxologist like this. However, the "Life & Works of Friedrich Engels" by Zelda Kahan Coates written in 1920 has just been reprinted, and in as slim a volume gives a much clearer, correct and serious appreciation of Engels. I doubt very much if anyone will think of reprinting McLellan in 57 years time.

*Gustav Mayer's Biography has been out of print since the 30's and the current Moscow and E. Berlin volumes, are turgid Stalinist 'orthodoxy'.

Stevie Cushion

The Theory of Permanent Revolution

A Critique by Loizos Michail.

Published by the Trotskyism Study Group
of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The rise of Stalinism in Russia was heralded and consolidated by an attack on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Trotskyism was contrasted to Leninism in order to give credence to the new 'official' version of Leninism. The object of Michail's pamphlet is not fundamentally different although it is perpetrated in a more veiled fashion.

In Michail's version of events we find Lenin the wily empiricist, a man concerned with 'the concrete analysis of the concrete situation', with the 'uniqueness' of each new turn of events. Trotsky takes the stage as something resembling a brash astrologer, given to wild and unfounded predictions concerning the future course of the Russian revolution. Lenin, we are informed, used Marxism as a tool to shed light on each new situation whereas Trotsky constructed his theories of logical deductions from abstract categories. Thus Trotsky comes to occupy the same 'theoretical space' as the Mensheviks, the only difference being that Trotsky was rather more optimistic about the possible outcome of the proletarian dictatorship than were the Mensheviks. In this way Michail succeeds in reducing Leninism, and consequently Marxism, to the level of empiricism. This should come as no surprise when we remember that the 'Eurocommunists' justify their slide into reformism by reference to the 'uniqueness' of post war capitalism.

It is certainly true that Trotsky had a number of differences with Lenin in the period 1903-1917. The most important of these concerned the centrality and method of building a revolutionary party. This difference was resolved in February 1917 when Trotsky, to use his expression, 'Leninised the theory of permanent revolution' through a recognition of the role of the Bolshevik Party. (Contrary to Michail's claim Trotsky does not argue that Lenin was won to his strategy between February and October 1917 rather it was the case that Trotsky incorporated Leninism into his theoretical armoury.) It is true, however, that Lenin and Trotsky had differences on the *possible* role of the peasantry and the *possible* outcome of the bourgeois revolution prior to 1917. It is upon these differences that much of Michail's argument rests.

'The error of Trotsky's analysis', Michail writes, 'arose from the contention that the nature of the social relations in Russia . . . laid the whole burden of the bourgeois revolution upon the shoulders of the proletariat'. Michail goes on to argue that Trotsky gave no role to the peasantry prior to the seizure of power by the proletariat. This is essentially a false characterisation. What Trotsky did say was that the peasantry, due to its atomised and heterogeneous nature could not form a coherent, independent strategy for completing the tasks of the bourgeois revolution. Thus it could be won by the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. It was therefore essential that the proletariat placed itself at the head of peasantry in the struggle against the autocracy. In a leaflet written in 1905 Trotsky argues:

'Is it thinkable to introduce socialism in Russia immediately? No, our countryside is far too benighted and unconscious. There are still too few real socialists among the peasants. We must first overthrow the autocracy, which keeps the masses of the people in darkness. The rural poor must be freed of all taxation, the graduated progressive income tax, universal compulsory education must be introduced; finally, the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat must be fused with the town proletariat into a single social democratic army. Only this army can accomplish the great socialist revolution'. Here Trotsky outlines a proletarian programme capable of answering the needs of the peasantry — one which can draw them into the struggle behind the proletariat.

Was Lenin's position fundamentally different? No, it was not. It is true that Lenin did not consistently foresee the fusion of the proletarian socialist and bourgeois revolutions as completely as Trotsky did. However, Lenin at no time separated the struggle against the autocracy from the struggle for socialism. Lenin recognised that in the fight to overthrow the autocracy the proletariat and the peasant masses had a community of interests, thus an alliance could be forged. This alliance rested not upon programmatic concessions by the proletariat to the peasantry but upon the winning of the peasantry to the Marxist understanding of the tasks of the Russian bourgeois revolution. The struggle for the democratic republic, in Lenin's view, was inseparable from the struggle for socialism precisely because the establishment of such a republic laid the basis for open warfare between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, a war in which the alliance between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie elements of the peasantry would be shattered. Thus in 'Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution' Lenin argues that the proletariat should be:

'At the head of the whole people, and particularly of the peasantry — for complete freedom, for a consistent democratic revolution, for a republic! At the head of all the toilers and the exploited — for socialism'. As a result of this strategy Lenin at all times stressed the need for complete independence of the proletariat from all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements.

Where then is the dichotomy between Lenin and Trotsky? In purely theoretical terms it can be argued that Lenin in his formula of the 'Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry' diverged from Trotsky in assigning the peasantry an independent role. Indeed Trotsky did argue that such a democratic dictatorship was not possible since the bourgeoisie revolution could only be *completed* by a dictatorship of the proletariat resting on the peasantry. However, it was the recognition by both Lenin and Trotsky of the inseparability of the bourgeois and socialist revolutions and therefore of the need for an independent proletarian programme that allowed the two to come together politically after the February revolution.

Michail's attempt to produce a fundamental rift between Lenin and Trotsky from the role of the peasantry is as absurd as his attempt to place Trotsky in the camp of the Mensheviks. The Menshevik strategy was dominated by a mechanical application of crude Marxism to Russian conditions. They believed that Russia would first have to pass through the stage of capitalism before socialism was on the agenda. The role of the social democrats was one of 'extreme oppositon' in a bourgeois republic, a role of keeping the bourgeoisie in check. This of course meant the complete subordination of the proletarian programme to that of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat could not consider seizing power for fear of frightening the bourgeoisie

Women and the Unions

Sheila Lewenhack

Ernest Benn Ltd £7.50

and thus contributing to the failure of the revolution. It is true that Martynov speculated upon the possibility of the social democrats finding themselves in power but the core of the Menshevik strategy was that this possibility should not occur. How then is it possible to place Trotsky, who argued for the absolute necessity of a proletarian seizure of power were the revolution to survive, alongside the Mensheviks? Indeed, it is clear that this is not possible.

We should note at this point that Michail's attack on Trotsky is hardly original. When Michail writes:

'Trotsky shared the same theoretical framework as the Mensheviks, differing from them only in his assessment of the revolutionary capacity of the bourgeoisie . . .' (p.18), he is simply echoing one J.V. Stalin who in course of laying the basis for the theory of 'socialism in one country' wrote:

' . . . Permanent Revolution is an underestimation of the peasant movement which leads to the *repudiation* (original emphasis) of Lenin's theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat'.

'Trotsky's 'permanent revolution' is a variety of Menshevism'.

(J.V. Stalin 'On the Opposition' p.150 — PEKING 1974).

In reality, Stalin had transformed Leninism into Menshevism. The subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to the programme of the nationalist Kuomintang was based precisely upon the Menshevik strategy of revolution by stages — this policy bore its rotten fruit with the slaughter of thousands of communists by their nationalist 'allies'. Equally Michail's attempt to *subordinate* revolutionary strategy to each new turn in the class struggle (to the 'specificity of the conjuncture' perhaps?) grows from the desire to justify the class collaboration and systematic liquidation of Leninism as practised by the CPGB and its 'Eurocommunist' mentors.

The fact of Trotsky's opposition to the Mensheviks being demonstrated after the February revolution is virtually ignored by Michail. Here, Michail's method of 'concrete analysis' virtually disappears. For mysterious and unaccountable reasons Trotsky did not find himself in the bourgeois government — he joined the Bolshevik party. The unity of the positions of Lenin and Trotsky was now demonstrated in practice. Lenin had recognised as long ago as 1905 when he wrote 'Two Tactics of Social Democracy' that the democratic dictatorship would inevitably be superseded by events. It was to this situation that the April theses were addressed. Trotsky had been proved absolutely correct in his assessment of the balance of class forces in Russia. The February revolution was the partial completion of the bourgeois revolution but on the basis of the Menshevik - Social Revolutionary - Cadet government it was not possible for the revolution to advance further — indeed there was an overwhelming threat that the gains of that revolution were about to be liquidated. The responsibility for the completion of the revolution rested squarely on the shoulders of the proletariat — both Lenin and Trotsky recognised that, the Mensheviks did not. As far back as 1905 Trotsky had argued that the completion of the democratic revolution by the proletariat would require the implementation of socialist measures to protect the proletarian dictatorship. In September 1917 Lenin, in his article 'The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It' argued:

'It is impossible to stand still in history in general, and in wartime in particular. We must either advance or retreat. It is impossible in twentieth century Russia, which has won a Republic and democracy in revolutionary way, to go forward without advancing towards socialism'. Is this not clearly an application of the tactics of permanent revolution?

As I have demonstrated Lenin and Trotsky did not occupy different 'theoretical spaces'. Trotsky's theory, far from being teleological was based upon an application of Marxist theory to the specific conditions of the Russian economy in the early part of the twentieth century. To try and argue that Trotsky's theory, grounded as it was in the theory of combined and uneven development was fundamentally the same as the stagism of the Mensheviks is simply ridiculous. To argue that Lenin simply adopted himself to each new turn of events is also ridiculous. A Marxist programme flows from an understanding of the specific epoch of capitalism (i.e. imperialism) and finally from an understanding of the period of capitalist development and the unique features of particular situations. It was this methodology which guided both Lenin and Trotsky as distinct from the Mensheviks who did indeed proceed from logical deductions from the abstract category of bourgeois revolution. In short, Michail's pamphlet is simply a reflection of the liquidation of Marxism to empiricism which has taken place throughout the 'Eurocommunist' Parties — the fact that this liquidation is dressed up in Althusserian garb does not in the least alter matters.

Charlie Shell

If anyone can afford to buy this book, or order it through a public library, it would be well worth it. Sheila Lewenhack has carefully documented the role of women in the productive process from pre-industrial society through the 1st world war to the early 60s. She does not, however, attempt to analyse the economic and ideological role of women in production in relation to her position in the family.

Most importantly, Sheila Lewenhack shatters the myth that women have only recently become part of the labour movement and thus peripheral to it. 'Women workers . . . were there before unions existed. They shared in labour history from its earliest beginnings . . . for the mass of the female population. . . life meant work. Women's lower status as citizens left them with a low status as workers and held back their Trade Union organisation. But throughout British history they have, to some extent, been involved in organisations of workpeople and played some part in the labour and Trade Union movement'.

But, it *is* true to say that at no time were women *equal* in status to men. Before the Industrial Revolution women worked in the home alongside the rest of the family, weaving, spinning, etc. and working on the land. Merchants would often pay a lower wage for the women's products or pay the head of the household for the products of the whole family. This was known as the 'family wage', and ensured the binding of the family to the merchant. Some women had their own crafts as brewers, fishmongers, bell-founders, tanners or glovemakers and were often members of Guilds. But here again they were often paid less for their products and the men tried to force them out of the craft.

With the 'Industrial Revolution' the peasantry were forced off the land and into the growing towns to find work. For women this meant either work in the factories, mainly in the textiles industries where she could use her skills at spinning and weaving, or as domestic servants. Until the 1st World War huge numbers of women were domestic servants, working for a pittance extremely long hours. Sometimes police would literally force women into domestic work. For women who could find no paid work prostitution was often the only alternative.

Before the Industrial Revolution the running of the domestic household and social production existed alongside each other. The growth of the factory system and its high productivity made it impossible for the old cottage industry to survive. The factory system brought about a total separation in time and place between social production in the factory and domestic work in the home. For women this meant exploitation in the workplace coupled with oppression in the home — working class women's oppression under capitalism — the basis of the modern women's question.

As machinery became more and more advanced jobs became fewer. Women and children were used by employers as cheap labour often in preference to men. The response of the male workers was to try and protect their living standards, and that of their families, by pushing women and children out of production. The skilled craft worker was especially hostile to women workers.

In many jobs employers, with the support of male workers, operated a 'marriage bar' where women had to leave the job when they got married.

The pattern of men trying to keep women out of work as the means of protecting their wages and jobs has persisted throughout labour history. For the employers the struggle between different sections of the working class for jobs kept deliberately scarce, defuses the militancy of the working class, enables them to cut wages and keep profits high. Furthermore, women can be used as a cheap pool of labour — a cheap, undercutting alternative to expensive, well-organised male workers.

The craft unions, with the most conservative section of the working class, were closed to women and so women formed their own Friendly Societies or all-female unions which tended to ghettoise them from the working class. Nevertheless, many sections of women were extremely militant, especially in the textile industries, which had the only mixed trade union, and where many women were active supporters of the suffragette movement.

Lewenhack documents a number of strikes led by women themselves, for example a successful strike for higher wages by Kensington washerwomen in 1834, and a struggle for equal pay by textiles

workers in Glasgow in 1833.

But it was the unskilled unions, formed in the 1890s, against the elitism of the craft unions, that drew women in. But women were often given lower grading, ensuring they couldn't have a place in the leadership, or put into all-female branches.

The strikes in 1887 of the matchworkers, resulting in the formation of a matchworkers union, of the onion skinners in East Ham, and the rubber workers in Silverstown led by Eleanor Marx, gave women renewed confidence. By 1913 433,000 women were in Trade Unions.

During the First World War, inexperienced women were drawn into production in vast numbers, many of whom had never worked before. Child-care facilities mushroomed for this new army of labour. Men, fearing for their jobs, actively campaigned to unionise them and fought for equal pay in jobs held by men fighting in the war. By 1918 there were 1,209,278 women in Trade Unions, an enormous increase.

But after the war, women were thrown out of work with the full agreement of the Trade Unions. By 1920 women's trade union membership had fallen to around 700,000 and women took little part in the unemployment demonstrations and marches in the 20s and 30s.

An important factor in the failure of the trade union movement to take up and support women's rights are the trade union leaders. Sheila Lewenhack describes a strike by 30,000 chain workers in the Black Country for a minimum wage in 1912. The Union leaders negotiated with the employers and sent the workforce back with 23 shillings for the men and only 12 shillings a week for the women. In 1913 the TUC resolved to press for a minimum wage for all workers but 50% more for men. There are many other examples. It will be necessary therefore for women to fight trade union leaders as well as male workers at the rank and file level.

It is not hard to see why women are suspicious of trade unions and why they are so neglected by the trade union movement today. If women are to take an active part in unions they need to win policies of positive discrimination within those unions — encouraged to become shop stewards, union meetings in work time, and real commitment to their struggles from male workers in the fight to build a mass working class women's movement.

Clare Silverman

A Worker In A Worker's State

Miklos Haraszti

Penguin, in association with New Left Books.

"A Worker in a Workers' State" is Miklos Haraszti's analysis of working conditions and management practices on the shop-floor in Hungary today. It is also an account of the author's personal experiences in the Red Star tractor factory on the outskirts of Budapest where he worked as a millwright for six months. The merit of the book is that it vividly portrays the attitudes and consciousness of workers at the factory and the effect on these workers of the Hungarian bureaucracy's current piece-work strategy on the shop-floor.

The drive to reintroduce and strengthen the piecework system in the Hungarian factories was an integral component of the bureaucracy's "New Economic Mechanism". Alongside greater managerial autonomy and the introduction of market criteria to decide prices and production norms, it was designed to force the Hungarian workers to pay for the crisis of economic stagnation facing the bureaucracy in the late 1960's with increased work-loads and deteriorating working conditions.

"Piece-Rates", as the book was originally titled, is presented by the publishers in the trappings of a sociological study of the workshop in Hungary. For instance, it carries an introduction by Heinrich Boll who describes the book as containing "... various elements, some of which have so far been absent from the literature of work. It is first of all a detailed sociographic account of the techniques and terminology of work in a metal factory and of the relation of these techniques, terms and categories to that sacred something for which all workers have to work: their pay, their living."

Never-the-less the book is more political in content and more specific in its conclusions than the term 'sociology' implies and it is largely devoid of the academic mumbo-jumbo that is the pillar of this subject. This is not to say that Haraszti's argument is the epitome of political clarity. For instance, although one of the main implications of the book is that a major capitalist institution,

if not capitalism itself, has been introduced in Hungary, there is not the slightest hint as to why this has occurred.

Haraszti's history entitles him to a special place in the Eastern European 'dissident' movement and the English edition carries useful and copious notes on the author's life history. He is a socialist who has observed the machination of the Hungarian bureaucracy in general and personally. Yet he has used periods of enforced curtailment of his liberties to examine and experience at first hand the condition of the Hungarian working class and the regime of Hungarian factory life. His indictment of Hungarian 'Socialism' proceeds from his observations of the situation of the working class in the Hungarian Bureaucracy's 'Workers State'.

Haraszti shows how the two-machine and piece-work system are used to progressively reduce wages and at the same time boost productivity. He describes the state of frenzied exhaustion in which workers labour under this system, and the extremely dangerous conditions which workers are prepared to impose on themselves in order to earn a living wage. He uncovers the way in which the 'official' bureaucracy at shop floor level rests on a layer of skilled and craft conscious workers and how these are gradually incorporated into the state apparatus. He demonstrates the absolute cynicism of the work force at the Red Star factory. Here is how Haraszti is introduced to the piece-work system by a fellow miller on the neighbouring pair of machines:

"I can see they've shown you what ... to do, but as for making money, well, they haven't told you a thing about that. If you want to do that too, you've got to learn the score. If you don't, with the money you'll be making you won't even have enough to go out begging for the air you breathe. Believe me, they don't give a damn about what happens to you."

This miller attempts to dispell any illusions Haraszti may have in the technical and scientific dressing which surrounds the piece-rate on the work sheets. The scene continues:

"Then brushing aside the jumble of mysterious letters and figures with a sweep of his hand he says, 'None of that need bother you. Here are your holy words ... That's the piece-rate. That is the only thing we look at ... But if that lot up there want to slash the piece-rate - otherwise called readjusting the norm - they have only to give the order, and down it comes by such and such per cent. They just sit there with the rate-fixers, add, multiply, divide and rub out, and at the end of all this, the piece-rate has dropped. But on paper it looks fine;"

Haraszti ignores these warnings and tries to work to the technical instructions in order to analyse what the piece rates really mean for the worker. He discovers, for instance, that if the time per piece is 3.3 minutes he takes "about four minutes a piece and that does not include the time needed to set up the run"; ie that the time per piece can make it appear that if a worker works hard and diligently for the complete working day then a living wage could be earned. But if the quality and safety instructions are heeded then it would not be worth-while the worker bothering to work. The result? The millers abandon all quality and safety regulations in order to make enough pieces to earn a decent wage.

Noting Haraszti's experiment, his neighbour smiles: "What are you trying to prove with these chemical calculation? You'll never earn more like that. While you did your sums, I made at least 10 Forints. And I knew the result before you started: You're broke."

Haraszti soon finds that the setters who are supposed to be there to help smooth production problems such as a machine fault can never be found when they are needed. This results in further losses in earnings for the millers. The neighbouring miller explains the situation sagely, "Look, they're just not here to make life easy for you. The bosses know perfectly well that the setters simply waste your time ... They're all friends of the bosses; that's why they're setters. They are on the way up ... Now you just tell me where in your opinion, the older setter has been spending all his time these past two months? He was chairman of the local magistrate's court. On full pay, plus all the usual extras, of course. It's the same with the others. The younger one, who only became a setter last year, will be made a trade-union representative or Party secretary by next year, you'll see. The works manager was also a setter in his time. In a word, they're all in it together."

The merciless pressure to keep working at break neck speed, ignoring all safety regulations and technical instructions, in order to better the norm (workers call this 'looting') and earn a decent wage furnishes Haraszti with some horrendous stories of mutilation of workers. He describes the hair raising method an old miller uses to grind the teeth on cog wheels and asks:

"Is it safe to work with so few clamps? Does he have time to check that they are fastened tightly enough or that the piece isn't going to smash into the revolving head? He (the old miller) never asks questions like this. If he worked to the rules ... his job would be metamorphosed into 'bad' work, and he would have lost his 'living'. We were made tragically aware of the way L (the old worker) worked."

There was an accident involving another miller who put L's pieces through their next operation. This worker also took a +antage of the chance to pivot the pieces around. The milling head tore off the fingers from his right hand. The stretcher on which they carried him out passed right in front of old L's machine."

"The foreman sent for the millers and gave us a little talk in his office." The foreman emphasises, "We must learn from what has just happened. You are grown men, I know, but you shouldn't be ashamed to learn. Has anyone got any questions? Now, please sign the minutes of this ad hoc meeting." The foreman draws their attention to the importance of keeping to the technical regulations, and the workers register their agreement. And the result of this warning? "We went back to the section, and everyone continued exactly as before including old L".

These appalling shop floor conditions, the workers apparent toleration of them, and the severe atomisation of the Hungarian working class under the massive dead weight of the bureaucracy and their piece-work system has left Haraszti with scars of deep pessimism about the ability of workers to fight back to permanently rid themselves of the shackles of the bureaucracy.

Another failing of the book is the lack of a framework to surround its detailed descriptions and its implied conclusion. If there are any doubts as to these implications they are dispelled in Haraszti's court statement at his trial. He says "The prosecution is seeking the condemnation of the attitude which wants to expose reality, the belief that our society contains conflicts, the belief that it is the duty and the interest of socialism to bring these conflicts to light . . . Acceptance of this view would not eliminate conflict. On the contrary, it would delay their solution."

"In the present case, this means that the retention of piece-work, this institution created by capitalism, may serve the interests of certain social groups, but not those of the majority."

"If the courts were to accept the point of view of the prosecution, it would be defending the interests of a very clearly definable sociological group."

But his argument throughout the book fails either to reinforce this point or to seriously explore the political implications of this vital observation. He remains unclear as to whether it is the wages system in general, or the piecework system in particular which categorises the system as "not socialist". His belief that the piecework system represents the interests of a "very clearly definable sociological group" does not lead him to develop any analysis of the bureaucratic state or of the relationship of the working class to political power.

The reader is left unclear as to what would happen if the piecework system was replaced by the old hourly-rate, or at the very least to wonder how Haraszti characterised the political system before the introduction of the piece-rates. No reason is given for the introduction of piecework by the Bureaucracy, apart from retelling its excuse that "payment by results was the ideal form for socialist wages . . ." as "it was . . . the embodiment of the principle, 'from each according to his capacity, to each according to his work'."

He believes the piecework system has duped and confused the Hungarian working class to such an extent that it has been immobilised and only a reform re-instating an hourly rate would allow the possibility of a growth of class consciousness.

In this way Haraszti focuses his perspective for change, not on the Hungarian working class, but on a specific section of the Hungarian bureaucracy. In fact that section of the bureaucracy least enamoured of the New Economic Mechanism, most desirous of a return to the centralised command economy, has always been equally complicit in the Stalinist system which drowned the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in blood, which systematically deprives the Hungarian workers of political power. There can be no perspective for the emancipation of the Hungarian working class built on expectations of change initiated by this faction of the bureaucracy.

Within Haraszti's model the working class is duped and atomised by the management and bureaucracy. While able to observe the exploitation and alienation of Hungarian workers, he has no concept of overcoming their backwardness and atomisation.

Unlike many 'dissidents' in East Europe, Haraszti's critique of the Stalinist system starts with the position of the working class and the hollow claims of the bureaucracy. However he shares with so many dissidents a deep pessimism in the possibilities of working class action. Such fatalism fails to recognise that it is only the power of the organised workers - as in Hungary in 1956, and in Poland in 1970 and 1976 - that can confront the bureaucracy head-on to install a genuine workers' state. Instead, it falsely looks to sections of the bureaucratic apparatus (in the case of Haraszti) to initiate change in the interests of the working class.

Despite all these criticisms, "A Worker in a Worker's State will prove a valuable book for any interested in the condition of the working class in Hungary and also the politics of one section of the Eastern European 'dissident' movement.

Robin Camacho

WHERE WE STAND

1 Capitalism condemns the vast majority of mankind to poverty, insecurity and war. Once a progressive system which vastly enlarged the productive forces on a scale hitherto un-

known, it always rested upon the concentration of ownership and control in the hands of a few while the vast majority laboured in conditions of poverty and squalor.

Capitalism, having as its source the exploitation of the working class, is constantly impelled to increase the rate of exploitation in the interests of the competitive survival of each unit against its rivals. Blind production for profit, ever sharper rivalry and competition, result in periodic, more or less sharp, economic crises of over-production. Capitalism is torn with contradictions internal to itself; the most general is the conflict between the tremendous expansive powers of modern large scale industrial production and the fetters imposed on it by production for profit, national barriers and the planless rivalry of world market. The constant revolutionising of science and technology and the potential this holds for improving the lot of mankind is never realised under capitalism. Millions starve in a world of abundance. Indeed, the gap between the wealthy and the poor becomes ever wider.

The so-called communist countries are not communist or socialist. The proletariat does not hold state power in these countries. The mode of production is bureaucratic state capitalism and the bureaucracy is the ruling class.

The increasing intensity of competition between multinational cartels and nation states (including the Stalinist states) threatens mankind with economic ruin and war. The capitalists and the Stalinist bureaucracies are driven to intensify their exploitation of the working-class to escape from the crisis of their own making. From the deepening crisis and stagnation capitalism can only escape by crushing all the independent organs of resistance of the working class.

2 Imperialism marks the maturing of capitalism into a conflict ridden world wide system of exploitation. It marks the opening of the epoch of wars and revolutions

Imperialism condemns two-thirds of humanity to super-exploitation and systematic under-development of their countries, crushing the development of their productive forces and making them sources of super profits and raw materials for the 'advanced countries'.

The exploitation and oppression practised by capitalism and imperialism call forth forces of resistance both from the working class-the proletariat- and the oppressed masses and nationalities.

The working class, itself the product of capitalism, has shown its power to challenge and overthrow this system in a series of struggles unprecedented in the history of all exploited classes.

The exploited nationalities, victims of imperialism, have also shown their ability to challenge and overthrow the forces of the strongest imperialist powers. The successful socialist outcome of such struggles, however, depends on the conscious leadership of the working class in national strugg-

les under the leadership of a revolutionary party basing its programme on the theory of the permanent revolution:- the independent organisation of the working class for power, the leadership by the working class of all anti-imperialist forces, the spreading of the revolution beyond the boundaries of a single state. The working class must take up, as its own, struggles of all oppressed classes and social strata: peasantry, oppressed nationalities, races, women etc. It must take up as its own, every serious democratic demand of the broad masses. It alone can lead these struggles to final victory.

3 The bourgeois state must be smashed by the working class. It must be replaced by the dictatorship of the proletariat over the exploiters. Democratic collective control over the means of production and distribution is possible only by a state of workers' councils. The dictatorship of the proletariat is only a transitional period, ending with the complete withering away of the state and the abolition of classes – Communism.

Though a workers' state can come into existence in a single country, prolonged isolation opens the way to defeat or degeneration. The proletarian revolution must expand internationally or perish. The working class is the only class capable of leading an international onslaught against the bourgeoisie, though all oppressed classes and nationalities have a direct interest in supporting and forwarding its struggles.

4 At the same time, the nature of capitalist production, the development of technology, its increasing concentration makes more and more possible and necessary the replacement of bourgeois relations by true social production – democratically planned production for social need.

Only a social revolution led by the working class can accomplish this transformation. Such a revolution would transfer the means of production into common property and abolish the division of society into classes, liberate all the oppressed and rid society of distinctions of class, creed, race and sex.

The working class gains the experience to revolutionise society by constant struggle against the ruling class, through mass organisations created in the course of that struggle – trade unions, factory committees, workers' councils, and through the struggle of the oppressed for their own liberation.

5 However, the more intense and concentrated the class struggle, the deeper the social crisis, the more does the bourgeoisie seek to divide and confuse the forces of the working class, attempting through its various agencies to sow sectionalism, craft consciousness, nationalism, sexism and the worst poison of all, racism.

In the class struggle the working class must develop a clear class strategy for conquering power. History has shown that the indispensable instrument for this is a party basing itself on a Marxist programme and rallying the most class conscious militants to it.

The party sets as its tasks the overcoming of the unevenness of working class experience, the fighting of bourgeois ideas and forces in the working class, the presentation of the lessons of past struggles and the bonding together and unifying of all fragmented struggles. All this with the aim of developing a conscious and coherent offensive against capitalism.

Such a party must consist of revolutionary working class militants, it must be the real vanguard of the class. The creation of such a party is the urgent task of all revolutionaries and working class militants.

The revolutionary party cannot be built on a national basis alone. We fight to build an international democratic centralist party – to combat the bourgeoisie on the basis of an international programme for workers' power. Such an international programme and party must be built on the lessons and experience of the first four Congresses of the Communist International and the re-elaboration of the 1938 programme of the Fourth International.

Workers Power does not believe such an international party exists. Neither has the necessary programmatic work been completed. The Fourth International needs to be re-created around a re-elaborated transitional programme, on a democratic - centralist basis.

6 In the twentieth century capitalism's survival has principally been the result of two forces:-

i) The reformist and Stalinist leaderships in the international labour movement. After World War I, capitalism, challenged by the first workers' state and a mass revolutionary wave, was saved in its heartlands by the reformist parties of the Second International. The incorporation of the reformist workers' parties and Trade Union leaders has remained a vital component of capitalist stability.

After World War II capitalism could not have survived and consolidated without the conscious support of the Stalinist parties. Notably in France, Italy and Greece the Stalinist parties disarmed the potentially revolutionary forces, giving power back to the bourgeoisie. In East Europe independent working class, peasant and nationalist movements were subordinated to the interests of the Russian bureaucracy (stability and shared spheres of interest) by the creation of client states to the Russian bureaucracy.

Born of the isolation of the Russian Revolution, nurtured on the destruction of the vestiges of workers' power in Russia and the elimination of revolutionary vitality in the Comintern, the Stalinist parties crossed to the camp of the bourgeoisie. In Russia and East Europe they have created states that must be destroyed by workers' revolutions. In the West they offer only collaborationist, national reformist programmes.

Stalinism and Stalinist parties are reactionary, an obstacle on a world scale, to the Socialist Revolution.

ii) In addition to the conscious counter-revolutionary role of the Stalinist and reformist workers' parties, capitalism has only survived as the result of the wholesale destruction of capital in two imperialist world wars and the subordination of the world economy to American Imperialism's massive expansion after World War II.

The exceptional stability and expansion of world capitalism after World War II has to be understood primarily as a result of these two factors. However, capitalism in the twentieth century cannot free itself from the pressures of inflation, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, increasing instability and a sharpening of competition on a world scale except at the expense of the working class.

7 The working class has, over the last 150 years, fought to create organisations capable of leading the struggle for Socialism. The early workers' organisations (e.g. the Char-

tists in England) the Social Democratic and Labour parties the Communist parties of the 1920's, all, at their foundations, were looked to by the workers to accomplish their emancipation. Yet the bourgeoisie and its agents in the working class exerted enormous pressure to corrupt and destroy them as weapons of class struggle.

This corruption has taken the form of reformism and capitulation to chauvinism. That is, the supposedly gradual transformation of capitalism through parliamentary reform and the identification of the working class with "its" nation and ruling class against the workers of other nations. The Labour and Communist Parties are thoroughly corrupted in this way — although many of their members and supporters sincerely wish to destroy capitalism.

8 The Labour Party, in its programme and policies, is firmly tied to the bourgeois state, committed to managing capitalism. It is a bourgeois party. In periods of boom, under working class pressure, it has enacted limited reforms which, however, leave the fundamental power bases of the ruling class intact. In periods of gathering storm like the present it acts as the bosses' most subtle weapon to claw back the concessions made over decades, attacking workers in struggle again and again.

Yet the Labour Party is a party rooted in the working class movement. The Trade Unions finance and support it and provide it with most of its activists. The vast majority of workers vote for it and see it as their party — as the one that should act for them and against the bosses. It is a bourgeois workers' party. In this contradiction lies the possibility of overcoming the crippling illusions in a peaceful parliamentary road to Socialism. We fight to strengthen every anti-capitalist action of the rank and file members within the Labour Party, every attempt to use it in the service of the class.

The Labour Party claims to be the party of the working class based on the Trade Unions. We defend the right of all varieties of Socialist thought to exist and organise in the Labour Party.

9 The revolutionary Left consists of fragmented and disunited groups stemming from the only consistently revolutionary tradition to emerge from the collapse of revolutionary communism in the 1920's and '30's, the followers of L.D. Trotsky and the Fourth International movement. Opportunism, sectarianism and dogmatism have wreaked havoc within this movement. However, the recreation of revolutionary parties and an International can take place only on the basis of the fundamental elements of this doctrine and method applied creatively to the new period of capitalist crisis opening before us.

The Workers' Power group sets itself the task of fighting for revolutionary unity based upon a principled programme. The elements of this programme are the basis for our current work and activity. We will co-operate in a non-sectarian fashion with all who agree with us in whole or in part. We seek fusion with all those with whom we have fundamental programmatic agreement.

THE PRINCIPLE PLANKS OF OUR PLATFORM

For a workers' revolution leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The parliamentary road to Socialism is an illusion demonstrated time and time again, most recently in the Chilean catastrophe.

For a revolutionary party based on a transitional programme and organised according to the principles of democratic-centralism - full freedom of political debate, disciplined unity in action.

For the reconstruction of the Fourth International on the basis of an international transitional programme and a democratic-centralist practice.

For unconditional support to all national liberation struggles against Imperialism and practical opposition to "our own" ruling class' policy of oppression.

No platform for Fascists. Against all forms of racism and immigration controls. For the right of immigrants to organise in their own defence. We fight mercilessly against racist ideas and leaders in the Labour Movement and for Labour Movement based united fronts to fight for these policies.

We support the workers of the so-called Communist states against their bureaucratic oppressors, considering that only a workers' revolution can transform them into true Workers' States. Such a revolution would mean the creation of Soviets, the smashing of the secret police and army and its replacement by a workers' militia, the smashing of the bureaucratic state apparatus and its replacement by soviet democracy and democratic, workers' controlled planned production. We adopt a defeatist position in any conflict between the Russian/East European bureaucracy, itself imperialist, and U.S. / West European Imperialism. We, however, defend Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, China against imperialism as these countries are non-imperialist powers.

We fight for complete social and political equality for Women, supporting their fight against male domination a feature of capitalism as of all previous class societies. We fight for all immediate demands promoting this aim while recognising that only the transition to Communism will remove the last vestiges of women's enslavement. In particular we fight for working class women who suffer both oppression as women and super-exploitation within the workforce at present. We fight against male chauvinism and the unequal treatment of women in society and the Labour Movement, for full and equal rights in the workplace. We fight for a woman's right to control her own fertility, for the socialisation of housework and for a mass working class women's movement. We support the struggle of gay people against discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

In the workers' movement and the Trade Unions we fight for:- the total independence of the Trade Unions from the State and from all legal shackles on the right to organise and to strike.

We fight to democratise the unions, putting them under the control of the rank and file. We fight for militant class policies; for all immediate and partial demands which increase and strengthen the morale and confidence of the working class. Against all attempts to make the workers pay the enormous cost, in terms of the loss of the partial gains made by generations of workers' struggles, for the British bourgeoisie to rationalise and re-structure industry for their own benefit.

For a working class counter-offensive, fighting to impose workers' control (not participation) of production, the only conclusion to this struggle is a planned economy and a workers' state. It is the duty of revolutionaries to convince the masses of workers in struggle and step by step, of the inevitability, necessity and possibility of achieving Socialism the only alternative offered to mankind is barbarism.

For practical solidarity with workers in struggle throughout the world. For the international unity of trade unions and especially for links between the rank and file of different countries.

We commit ourselves to polemic, debate and discussion with other tendencies of the Left to clarify the political differences, the possibilities of joint work, and to lay the basis for a principled regroupment on an international and national basis.